The Secular Transformation of Pride and Humility in the Moral Philosophy of David Hume

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MORAL PHILOPHY OF DAVID HUME

by

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ABSTRACT:
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In this dissertation I examine Hume's secular re-definition and re-evaluation of the traditional Christian understanding of pride and humility as part of his project to establish a fully secular account of ethics and to undermine what he thought to be the harmful aspects of religious morality. Christians traditionally have seen humility, understood as receptivity to God, to be crucial for individual and social flourishing, and pride as the root of individual and social disorder. By contrast, Hume, who conceives of pride and humility immanently in terms of our self-appraisals, sees pride as a key virtue that serves as the ultimate source of moral motivation and deems humility a 'monkish virtue' (i.e., a vice). Hume, moreover, sees religious appeals to a transcendent moral source to be a threat to individual flourishing in that they encourage the formation of what he calls 'artificial lives' (of which the monkish virtues are an expression) as well as a threat to social concord, insofar as they foster unnecessary religious factions, intolerance, and theologically sanctioned violence. In part to combat this, Hume promotes a wholly secular ethic rooted in common life.

I uncover the real points of agreement and disagreement that underlie Hume and traditional Christian conceptions of pride and humility in order to articulate what is essentially at issue between these contrasting perspectives and, ultimately, to identify some of what is gained or lost in Hume's secularization of ethics. I, thus, explore the reasons that Hume rejects Christian morality and seeks to replace it with a secular one. I then assess whether Hume's secular perspective has sufficient resources for addressing the biased judgments and rivalries that can arise precisely because of what Hume sees as our natural desire for the 'passion of pride' (i.e., for a positive sense of ourselves before others). I conclude both that Hume identifies genuine dangers in attempting to go beyond the human and also that there are genuine dangers in Hume's attempt to close the window to a transcendent moral source. I, therefore, contend that any adequate view of human flourishing must take account of both these dangers.

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REFERENCE KEY FOR ABBREVIATIONS OF PRIMARY TEXTS*

David Hume:

T = *A Treatise of Human Nature*

EHU = *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

EPM = *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*

NHR = *The Natural History of Religion*

D = *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

ESY = *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*

LDH = *The Letters of David Hume*

NL = *New Letters of David Hume*

LG = *A Letter from a Gentleman*

Aristotle:

NE = *Nicomachean Ethics*

Augustine:

CG = *City of God*

C = *Confessions*

CT = *On Christian Teaching*

Aquinas:

ST = *Summa Theologiae*

Pascal:

P = *Pensées*

OC = *Oeuvres Complètes*

Pierre Nicole:

ME = *Moral Essays*

CS = *Of Charity and Self-Love*

Martin Luther:

LW = *Luther's Works*

John Calvin:

ICR = *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

*See Bibliography for full citation information for these works.

INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I want to examine Hume's attempt to establish a fully secular

account of ethics, which is one of the first of its kind and continues to be influential

today.[1] I will focus specifically on Hume's secular transformation of the traditional

Christian understanding of pride and humility as a key locus for seeing what is at stake

in Hume's project.[2] In the Christian tradition, pride and humility are defined primarily in

relation to God, where humility is regarded as a fundamental virtue and pride as the root

of sin. By contrast, for Hume pride and humility are defined immanently in terms of

one's self-conception in relation to social approval and disapproval, where pride is seen

as a particularly important virtue and humility as a debilitating vice. Correspondingly,

while key Christian figures have thought that receptivity and submission to God (i.e.,

humility) is crucial to the flourishing of life in human community, Hume sees religious

appeals to a transcendent source to be a threat to our common life, and instead he

promotes a wholly secular ethic based on social praise and blame.[3]

I want to look at what difference these contrasting views in fact can make for

human flourishing so as to identify what is gained or lost in Hume's secularization of

ethics. Exploring Humean and Christian conceptions of pride and humility is an

especially illuminating angle from which to view issues surrounding flourishing, since of

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[1] By the term 'secular,' I mean either that it does not (or seeks not to) depend upon answers to larger metaphysical questions about the nature of the universe, or that it assumes atheism (or an agnosticism that has no bearing on practice) as a default position.

[2] I will only be examining pride and humility in Western Christianity because the forms of Christianity that Hume has in mind and engages with explicitly are the Protestant and Catholic traditions, rather than Eastern Orthodoxy.

[3] By 'transcendent source' I am referring to God or the gods or some "higher" reality (we could think of Plato's Forms in this vein). The notion of transcendence is complex, deserving thorough analysis in its own right, but I trust that the reader has a general sense of the sort of appeals to which I refer. (See Charles Taylor 2007 for some interesting discussions of transcendence (pp. 13-16, 542-44, 625-34).)

all character traits these two pertain most intimately to the self and one's identity,

especially as we stand in relation to ourselves, to others, and possibly also to God or

some other transcendent moral source. Accordingly, with particular attention to the role

positive self-assessment plays in Hume's conception of a good life, I will examine why

Hume declares humility to be a "monkish virtue" (i.e., a vice) and seeks to recover pride

as a virtue. I will also show how his reevaluation of pride and humility is bound up in his

project of overturning Christian morality (and thereby mitigating what he sees as some

of its harmful effects) and replacing it with a secular one.

This project was highly controversial given that the vast majority in the

eighteenth century believed that some sort of deity, be it the Christian God or a more

bleached, deistic God, provided a necessary foundation for morality and served as the

ultimate source of moral motivation by ensuring that virtue would be rewarded and vice

would be punished. An attempt to assert that God was irrelevant to morality thus would

have been seen as a threat to the moral fabric of society.[4] Samuel Clarke's friend

Richard Bentley expresses a fairly widespread concern in this regard when in *The Folly*

and Unreasonableness of Atheism he remarks:

> if Atheism should be supposed to become universal in this nation…farewell all
> ties of friendship and principles of honor; all love for our country and loyalty to
> our prince; nay farewell all government and society itself, all professions and
> arts, and conveniences of life, all that is laudable or valuable in the world. (*Works*
> 3:25)

Although there is good reason to think that Hume may not have been an atheist as we

understand the term today (i.e., someone who holds that God or some deity does not

exist), his skepticism towards religion, his clear view that the Christian conception of

God and Christian revelation lack sufficient epistemological basis to be anything more

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[4] See David Fate Norton's (1986) thorough discussion of this issue.

than highly dubious, and his attempt to establish the autonomy of ethics from God

altogether would have been seen to be a form of "atheism" by many at the time that

Hume was writing, and, in any case, Hume's ideas would have been regarded as

dangerous by most.[5] The way in which Hume tends to veil his deepest critiques of

religion in his earlier works (especially in the *Treatise of Human Nature*)[6] and his

decision not to have the (posthumously published) *Dialogues*, his most explicit and

formidable attack on religion, sent to press in his lifetime indicates just how

controversial Hume's moral philosophy was in the context in which he was writing.

I will concentrate on two central ways in which Hume thinks that Christian

morality is detrimental to human life, both of which emerge in the very way that he

reverses and redefines the traditional Christian moral categories of pride and humility.

First, Hume is concerned with the potential of religious morality for spawning social

discord. This worry was particularly pressing for Hume because although the religious

wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth century had subsided, eighteenth-century Scotland

continued to be divided by religious factions, which Hume thought hindered Scotland's

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[5] See Russell's discussion of the various ways that the term "atheism" was employed in the eighteenth century (2008, 47-57). See Bernard Williams (2006, 267), Terrance Penelhum (1994, 255), and Peter Millican (2002, 37) for arguments that Hume is rightly seen as an atheist if atheism is understood in the broader eighteenth-century sense. For discussions of Hume's religious views and how to best characterize them, see J. C. A. Gaskin (1983), Shane Andre (1993), Keith Yandell (1990), Paul Russell (2008, 278-89). Russell helpfully characterizes Hume as irreligious, pointing out that the terms "agnostic" or "religious skeptic," though fitting, "fail to identify properly and highlight the wholly *hostile* and *critical* character of Hume's general attitude toward religious doctrine and dogma" (2008, 284). Furthermore, these terms, if applied to Hume, could misleadingly suggest that he merely suspends judgment with respect to religious claims, when instead he indicates that "thicker" conceptions of theism (such as Christian concepts of God) are highly doubtful and probably false (2008, 284).

[6] Russell (2008) shows particularly well that despite the relative silence in the *Treatise* about religion (a silence which has lead many to regard the work as largely unconcerned with religion), Hume's arguments systematically aim to dismantle the foundations for Christian belief and morals. Notwithstanding these aims, Hume prudentially does not explicitly draw out the serious implications for religion that his arguments entail.

progress towards modernization (Herdt 1997, 11).[7] Hume saw religion (particularly

monotheistic religions) as being prone to spark the kind of zeal that would make factions

especially heated (NHR IX, 160-163).[8] Additionally, Hume thought that religious

controversies were ultimately irreconcilable, since they rest upon matters that he argued

are beyond the scope of human experience and hence of what we can be decided through

(empirically grounded) reason.[9] More importantly, though, Hume thought that religious

principles have no actual bearing on how we ought to conduct ourselves, and so he

believed the social divisions and violent intolerances that arose from religious disputes

to be unnecessary. As he says:

> But where the difference of principle is attended with no contrariety of action,
> but every one may follow his own way, without interfering with his neighbour,
> *as happens in all religious controversies*; what madness, what fury can beget
> such unhappy and such fatal divisions? (ESY 60, emphasis mine)

It was in this context Hume arguably sought to provide a common, non-sectarian basis

for moral discourse that would cut across religious division, thereby rendering the

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[7] See Herdt (1997, 10-12) for a discussion of the political debates between the Moderates of the Church of England, the Popular Party (the Evangelicals), and the Covenanters. See also Penelhum's discussion of the Moderates in relation to Hume and to the Presbyterian kirk in Scotland (2008, 324-26). See also chapters XII-XIII of MacIntyre (1988) for an appreciation of the philosophical and theological issues underlying some of the political disputes in Scotland.

[8] More precisely, Hume saw "revealed" religion (i.e., religion that depends upon divine revelation) rather than "natural" religion (i.e., religious conclusions attained by rational argument) to carry particular potential for exciting faction-inducing zeal among its adherents. I discuss the common eighteenth century distinction between natural and revealed religion in Chapter Two. Although I there discuss how and why Hume sought to undermine both forms of religion, it was revealed religion that Hume thought to be damaging to human life. Until I introduce these distinctions, however, I often will refer to revealed religion simply as religion, since religious forms as we commonly find them almost always contain elements of revealed religion.

[9] See "Of parties in general" in ESY, pp. 54-63. He says, for example, "the controversy about an article of faith, which is utterly absurd and unintelligible, is not a difference in sentiment, but in a few phrases and expressions, which one party accepts of, without understanding them; and the other refuses in the same manner" (ESY 59).

religious disagreement peripheral to social and political life (see Herdt 1997, 14). His

secularization of ethics is therefore, in part, an attempt to promote social peace.[10]

Hume's concern to foster social concord is also, as I will later argue in Chapter

Three, connected to why he thinks that pride, or warranted self-esteem, is an especially

important virtue. He sees a well-founded pride, when its display is appropriately

modulated by good manners, as contributing to the flourishing of human community in

two ways. First, Hume observes that the sort of genuine positive self-regard constitutive

of merited pride provides the security of being needed to facilitate the cultivation of a

wider, more extensive sympathy. Humility, which Hume understands to be habitual self-

depreciation, leads not to greater sympathy but to vicious comparisons whereby one

seeks to inflate one's depressed sense of self-worth through criticizing others (T 3.3.2.7,

380). Sympathy is vitally important for Hume because he thinks that it is fundamental to

our capacity for moral discernment, and also, he sees sympathetic understanding of

different points of view to be vital for a harmonious social body.[11] Thus proper pride,

that virtue which makes an extensive sympathy possible, becomes a virtue that is central

to Hume's sense of what contributes to a healthy way of relating to others.

Second, pride is a chief virtue for Hume because he regards it as motivationally

significant for all other virtues. Proper pride, on Hume's account, involves possessing a

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[10] Hume's interest in promoting social concord is immediately evident in the opening paragraph of the first statement of his moral philosophy given in Book III of the *Treatise*, where he says "Morality is a subject that interests us above all others: We fancy the peace of society to be at stake in every decision concerning it" (T 3.1.1.1, 293). For the centrality of Hume's concern for social peace, see Seibert 1990, Chapter Two, which is entitled "Religion and the 'Peace of Society'."

[11] See Jennifer Herdt's *Religion and Faction in Hume's Moral Philosophy* (1997) for an astute treatment of the relationship between Hume's concern with social conflict and his attempt to root moral judgment in sympathy. See also Annette Baier's remarks on how Hume's "concentration in Book Two [of the *Treatise*] on conflict and emotional see-saws…are also important topics for Hume's later account of how morality depends on a calm and steady sentiment, and of how its role is to prevent or end unwanted conflict, both within a person and between persons" (1991, 133).

sense of one's moral dignity, and it is precisely a prideful attachment to our character that can ultimately empower virtuous action towards others in those cases where we would seem to be able to profit through vice. Hume argues that a noble pride is particularly important for motivating justice (EPM IX.2, 282-83), a virtue that is especially necessary to the peaceful functioning of society. Thus, in this way, too, pride plays a significant role in fostering social concord.

Hume's position on pride and its relation to social peace can of course be contrasted with the traditional Christian view, wherein pride is seen to be the root cause of social strife and humility is regarded as integral to its healing. In *City of God*, for example, Augustine contends that true peace is found only in the heavenly city, where humility before God is a defining stance of its members (CG XIV.13, 573). Pride, which reigns in the earthly city, leads to lust for domination (CG XIV.18, 593), which, Augustine thinks, naturally follows when we make ourselves, rather than God, the center of our loves (CG XIV.13, 573).[12] One aim of this dissertation, thus, will be to assess the differing perspectives of Hume and Christians such as Augustine with respect to issues

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[12] Augustine says: "That is why humility is highly prized in the City of God and especially enjoined on the City of God during the time of its pilgrimage in this world; and it receives particular emphasis in the character of Christ, the king of that City (cf. Phil 2, 8-11). We are also taught by the sacred Scriptures that the fault of exaltation [i.e., pride], the contrary of humility, exercises supreme dominion in Christ's adversary, the Devil. This is assuredly the great difference that sunders the two cities of which we are speaking: the one is a community of devout men, the other a company of the irreligious, and each has its own angels attached to it. In one city love of God has been given first place, in the other, love of self" (CG XIV.13, 573).

The teachings of Father Zosima in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* represent another example of a Christian perspective that regards pride to be a key source of social discord. In Zosima's retelling of his life, it was his offended pride that led him to request a duel with the husband of the woman he fancied, and, indeed, we see throughout the novel the connection between pride and rivalry. Humility, on the other hand, is at the center of Zosima's spiritual teachings (e.g., that "each of us is guilty before everyone and for everyone" (298), that humility enables an affective appreciation of the goodness and beauty of all things (299), and that humble love is the strongest response to human sin (319)). Humility, for Zosima, leads to unity and reconciliation and is necessary to heal the social strife caused by pride.

surrounding religion and conflict as they are bound up with the concepts of pride and humility.

The second central way in which Hume thinks that Christian morality is inimical to flourishing is that in his view it contains an unnatural vision of life, requiring at times a break from what he calls the "natural and usual force of the passions" (T 3.2.2.18, 311). Hume's moral philosophy is rooted in a conception of ordinary human happiness, and with it he sought to counter and reveal to be nonsensical the ways in which Christianity requires the subversion of the normal operation of human passions. We see this most explicitly when Hume condemns the "monkish virtues" for opposing both pleasure and utility in the second *Enquiry* (IX.1, 270), but his opposition to what he saw as the anti-natural demands of Christian morality is also suggested elsewhere, for example, in his implicit endorsement in Book II of the *Treatise* of our natural love of property, fame, and beautiful bodies.

Hume's concern to promote ordinary happiness is likewise captured in his inversion of the Christian categories of pride and humility. Although Christians have classified pride as the first sin, Hume places pride as the first of the natural virtues. On his account it is natural to want to think well of ourselves, and a basic self-esteem is a necessary ingredient for any intelligible conception of a satisfying human life. Correspondingly, Hume regards humility, which he understands to involve self-abnegation and servility, to be contrary to any comprehensible picture of human happiness. This is why in "A Dialogue" Hume takes the humility of Pascal to be indicative of how his life has been made artificial by the "illusions of religious superstition" (EPM 343). Cultivating humility, Hume thinks, is so contrary to our natural

impulses that such habitual self-deprecation can be undertaken only when a person succumbs to a worldview that has lost traction with human experience.

We can imagine that the obligation to self-denial contained in the Christian promotion of humility and condemnation of pride would have touched a particular nerve in Hume, who was raised Presbyterian and lived in a time when Calvinism exerted a powerful influence on Scottish culture. A conversation Hume had with James Boswell just days before his death is revealing on this point. Boswell reports that Hume

> said he had never entertained belief in Religion since he began to read Locke and Clarke. I asked him if he was not religious when he was young. He said he was and used to read the *Whole Duty of Man*; that he made an abstract from the Catalogue of vices at the end of it, and examined himself by this, leaving out Murder and Theft and such vices as he had no chance of committing, having no inclination to commit them. This, he said, was strange work; for instance, to try if, notwithstanding his excelling his schoolfellows, he had no pride or vanity. (Boswell 1931, 227-228)

The Whole Duty of Man was a treatise on spiritual formation that was popular in eighteenth-century Scotland.[13] Not only does it dwell especially on the sinfulness of pride, but it, moreover, encourages us to regard ourselves as "worms of the earth…polluted and defiled, wallowing in all kinds of sins, and uncleanness." Cultivating this attitude allows us to acquire "such a sense of our own meanness, and [God's] excellency, as may work in us a lowly and unfeigned submission" to God's will (II.1.1, 34). Although little is known about Hume's religious upbringing, we can imagine how this sort of perspective might have negatively affected him at a young age. It is unsurprising that Hume would reject a Christian conception of humility that involves self-castigation and servile obedience, as well as the moral framework within which this conception of humility is at home.

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[13] See Jacques B. H. Alblas 1991 for an account of why and how this spiritual treatise, though arising out of the Anglican tradition, became popular among Calvinists.

It is important to note, however, that the portrait of humility given in *The Whole Duty of Man* is quite different from other dominant conceptions of Christian humility. Aquinas, for instance, takes pains to distinguish humility from the self-depreciating vice of pusillanimity and in fact links humility to the virtue of magnanimity (II-II:129.3.r4; II-II:162.1; II-II:162.1. r3; II-II:162. 2.r2; II-II:162.4.r3). Aquinas furthermore explicitly states that if by pride one means proper self-esteem, then it is virtuous and is not to be confused with the kind of pride he deems to be vicious (II-II:162.1.r1). Moreover, since Aquinas sees the virtues as constitutive of flourishing, humility on his account contributes to rather than hinders human happiness. A second key component of this dissertation therefore will be to look at the rival perspectives on pride and humility vis-à-vis the issue of individual happiness or flourishing, i.e., how pride or humility stand in relation to our affective formation and how they might foster or inhibit human fulfillment.

It should now be apparent though that a key difficulty in assessing the significance of Hume's secularization of pride and humility is that there is substantial disagreement about the nature of virtuous humility within the Christian tradition itself. Accordingly, what is gained or lost in Hume's secular transformation of these concepts will depend greatly upon which Christian conception of humility is under consideration. While Hume's account of pride and humility looks like more of a strict reversal of the account of these traits given in *The Whole Duty of Man*, it is not diametrically opposed to how, for example, Augustine and Aquinas understood them. What is needed, then, is first to look at how the concepts of pride and humility are understood within the two major theological traditions in Western Christianity.

In Chapter One, I therefore discuss these two dominant theological trajectories and explain how pride and humility take different shape within them. I show how the forms of Christianity with which Hume would have had the greatest contact (i.e., Calvinism and Jansenism) fall within what I will, following Charles Taylor, call the 'hyper-Augustinian' strand of Christian thought (represented, for instance, by Luther, Calvin, Pascal, and Pierre Nicole). I, furthermore, argue that Hume was quite right to reject the ways of conceiving of the relationship between religion and morality and, correspondingly, the conceptions of humility that are prevalent within this theological trajectory. I contend, however, that the really interesting and important issues emerge with respect to religion and human flourishing when we engage Hume's stance on pride and humility with the conceptions of these traits found within what I will call the 'Christian humanist' strand (represented, for example, by Aquinas, Erasmus, and the Cambridge Platonists).[14]

Indeed, I show that once we move beyond semantic differences we will see that there is widespread agreement (amidst crucial disagreement) between Hume and the Christian humanist trajectory, particularly with respect to the moral significance of self-esteem and the security of the self. I argue it is only when we fully appreciate this point

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[14] Charles Taylor coins the term 'hyper-Augustinianism' in *Sources of the Self* (1989, 246-47) and continues to use it in *A Secular Age* (2007, 227-28). In the latter work he contrasts it with 'devout humanism,' which in the historical context in which this comparison is made specifically refers to certain seventeenth-century thinkers, such as St. Francis de Sales, who suppose that "we can find within us that élan towards God on which we can build, the seed which we can nourish" (227) as opposed to hyper-Augustinians, who thought that our nature is so depraved that attempting to find that élan within us only further entraps us into self-delusion and pride. Although I want to draw the same the contrast that Taylor is making between these two streams of thought, I use the term 'Christian humanism' to signal that I am not limiting my discussion to seventeenth-century theologians but rather am referring to the broader theological trajectory in which 'devout humanism' was a seventeenth-century expression. Admittedly 'Christian humanism' is itself an imperfect designation since humanism is apt to suggest that I have in mind theologians from the Renaissance and onward, in which case it would seem odd that I am using Aquinas as the key spokesperson for this stream of thought. Despite the risk of possible confusion, I have not, however, found a term that better captures the spirit that unites theologians of this trajectory as a whole.

of agreement that we can adequately assess what difference a transcendent or immanent perspective might make to individual and social flourishing. I maintain that Hume has important critiques of religious morality; however, I also argue that Hume's failure sufficiently to engage with what I take to be better versions of Christian humility and morality in fact obscures problematic features in his own aim to render religion peripheral to the good life. The thesis I seek to defend is that Hume identifies genuine dangers in attempting to go beyond the human but also that there are genuine dangers in Hume's attempt to close the window to a transcendent moral source. I will therefore contend that any adequate view of human flourishing must take account of both these dangers.

Additionally, in and through making this larger argument, two secondary goals emerge. The first is to critique the hyper-Augustinian tradition, not only for its conception of humility but, more importantly, for the broader theological commitments that make this conception possible. Instead, I argue that the sorts of theological commitments characteristic of a Christian humanist model (and the version of humility that those commitments inform) offer what I take to be a more coherent and holistic account of flourishing and better allow for shared discourse and greater receptivity to important criticisms from without. These two theological streams can find analogous expression in other religious traditions, and, while drawing these connections to other religious traditions is beyond the scope of this dissertation, this study gestures towards wider implications for thinking about the relationship between religion and human flourishing in general.

My other secondary aim is to defend is the importance of humility for human flourishing. Although there has been renewed interest in humility as a virtue in recent years, by and large it has been neglected or rejected as a virtue since the rise of secular ethics—most likely because it was defined in explicitly religious terms for so long. In the sixth chapter I sketch an account of virtuous humility—one that is compatible with a Christian humanist understanding of humility (though the Christian conception goes beyond what can be made intelligible naturalistically) and that can also be situated within a broadly Humean moral outlook. (My suggestions for how to conceive of secular humility, however, will need to be distinguished from Hume's portrayal of humility as a vice and will require significant modifications to his account of the virtue of modesty.) I contend that humility, properly understood, should be seen as an important virtue—indeed, one that has the potential to mitigate the ways in which vicious forms of pride can be harmful to social and individual flourishing.

Summary of Chapters:

Chapter One: Pride and Humility in the Christian Tradition

In Chapter One I discuss the main features of the two dominant theological frameworks that have developed in Western Christian history and show how these different theological frameworks correspondingly influence how pride and humility are understood. I begin with Augustine, whose conception of pride and humility has been decisive for the accounts of these traits that later emerge within these two streams. I show how, for Augustine, humility is situated within his Christian eudaimonism. We are made for God, Augustine famously declares, and thus only find true happiness when we rest in God (C I.i.1, 3). Humility, for him, primarily refers to proper recognition and

joyful acceptance of our status as creatures and is thus constitutive of the upward turn of the soul to God by which we find the fulfillment of our being. Augustinian humility at its core also involves awareness of our dependency on God, not only for our existence but also for his grace in helping heal our inwardly divided souls. By contrast, we exhibit pride when we make ourselves our final resting place and think that we can achieve ultimate happiness solely through our own power.

I show that, for Augustine, pride and humility are of utmost significance in his theological and moral outlook, since they mark the distinction between the two cities in *City of God*: the earthly city is ruled by the prideful, i.e., by those for whom the self reigns; God reigns in the heavenly city where the people of God practice the humble turning of creature to creator. In this way, Augustine not only sees humility as central to the flourishing of individual souls, but, as was mentioned above, he regards it as necessary for genuine social peace. This is because the receptivity to God characteristic of humility includes seeking to be transformed by the will and love of God, which in turn involves coming to love others as persons made in God's image. Pride, by contrast, leads to domination, as the emphasis placed on self causes one to seek to lord over others, either directly or by striving to attain glory in others' eyes.

I go on to explain that Augustine's notorious contention that seeming pagan virtue is in fact only splendid vice is one consequence of Augustine's account of pride and humility. Since Augustine understands humility to be essentially bound up with the love of God in such a way that the failure to love God inevitably involves pride, Augustine's final assessment in *City of God* is that even the good works of pagans will always be contaminated with prideful love of glory. I then show how the two great

theological trajectories that emerge in the West after Augustine (the Christian humanist stream and the hyper-Augustinian stream) respond differently to the possibility of pagan virtue and hold correspondingly different conceptions of what is involved in humility and its relation to flourishing.

Central to the Christian humanist strand is the affirmation of reason's ability to discern the human good and the power of human agency to set about achieving it, even though thinkers in this stream affirm that human nature has been affected by sin and that we stand in need of grace. In other words, Christian humanists agree that human nature has suffered the corrupting effects of the Fall but maintain that these effects are not totalizing;[15] although we have a rooted tendency towards sin, we also have a natural orientation to God, as manifested in the way we can be drawn to truth, goodness, and beauty. Similarly, Christian humanists think that humans are genuine agents in their own moral development. While grace is seen to be important for moral and spiritual growth, they regard human agency as cooperating with grace, rather than being displaced by it.

I will take Aquinas to represent this trajectory since he has perhaps given this sort of theological perspective its most thorough and systematic articulation and is often looked to as a founding resource for contemporary theologians within this stream of thought (e.g., Bernard Lonergan, Henri de Lubac, and Karl Rahner, to name a few). As I will explain, Aquinas's positions on human nature, sin, and grace make it possible for him to grant virtue to pagans and, likewise, to affirm the possibility of good, non-prideful pagan self-love. In line with this orientation, Aquinas rehabilitates Aristotle's account of magnanimity (a feature of Aristotle's ethics about which many Christians

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[15] Post-Darwinian theologians are of course apt to interpret the Fall metaphorically, as a myth that portrays our propensity towards selfishness and self-enclosure.

were wary because of its resemblance to pride) and aligns it with humility. It is clear, therefore, that while humility for Aquinas involves a proper recognition and acceptance of our limits, weaknesses, dependencies, and moral failings, it does not amount to self-depreciation. Rather, he regards humility as important for individual as well as communal flourishing. Furthermore, although Aquinas, like Augustine, defines humility primarily with reference to God, I also show how he opens up space for a naturalistic account of humility, which likewise can be seen as indispensible to the human good—a crucial point that will allow for engagement with Hume's perspective in Chapter Six.

I then explain core features of the second theological trajectory, the hyper-Augustinian tradition, in order to show why the religious humility with which Hume would have been acquainted looked primarily like self-negation. (This trajectory shares Augustine's strong emphasis on sin, wariness of reason, and stress placed on the role of grace. But it is called *hyper*-Augustinianism because, as I explain in Chapter One, its rejection of eudaimonism and its affinity with theological voluntarism causes these positions to become exaggerated and intensified.) Theologians in this strand are united in their conviction that the Fall was so catastrophic as to render human nature wholly corrupt. This view tends to have two consequences. First, our rational capacities are seen to be so marred by sin that we cannot reliably identify the good by our own lights. (When hyper-Augustinianism is accompanied by theological voluntarism, as in the Protestant Reformers, this view is bolstered even further. If God's will is what *makes* something good, then reason is not the appropriate route to discerning goodness in the first place. It is ultimately only through faith in divine revelation, wherein God expresses his commands, that we come to know what is good.) Second, we are so corrupted that

we cannot even make a successful attempt at goodness through our will but are wholly dependent upon divine grace, and, at least for the Protestant Reformers, this is understood in such a way as to make it seem that grace supersedes rather than cooperates with human agency.

Thus for the hyper-Augustinians, pagans (as well as false Christians, who post-Medieval theologians were more concerned to identify) are unable to achieve virtue or even to reason well about the good. On the contrary, they are perpetually guilty of pride and prideful self-love. In this framework humility thus comes to involve a thorough-going awareness of the depths of our depravity and of our inability to be virtuous by our own power. Especially for the Protestant Reformers who embraced theological voluntarism, humility also comes to include submission to the (inscrutable) divine wisdom, over and against relying upon our own insight.

In addition to showing the different conceptions of humility within Christian thought, presenting Aquinas's account in this chapter will set the backdrop for later arguing in Chapter Three that Hume's critique of Christian humility more accurately targets the hyper-Augustinian conception but that the Christian humanist conception of pride and humility represented by Aquinas largely (though not entirely) resists Hume's critique. It will also lay the foundation for later setting Aquinas's perspective in conversation with that of Hume's in order to explore some critical issues that emerge with regard to their differing positions regarding the relationship between religion and human flourishing.

Chapter Two: Hume's Secular Ethic of Ordinary Life and His Critique of Religious Morality

In Chapter Two, I pave the way for later looking at what is at stake in Hume's secular transformation of pride and humility, and with it, his secularization of ethics, by presenting Hume's objections to Christian morality. I show how the two theological trajectories described in Chapter One give rise to two different ways of conceiving of the relationship between religion and morality as seen in 1) the natural law tradition, which is prominent among Christian humanists, and 2) divine command theory, prominent among voluntarist hyper-Augustinians, such as the Scottish Calvinists of Hume's day. I offer Hume's epistemological critiques of both accounts by explaining why he thinks that neither 'natural' nor 'revealed' religion is a philosophically legitimate basis for morality, is necessary to ground morality, or is needed to motivate morality. I then detail the practical reasons for Hume's rejection of Christian morality that were mentioned above—namely, its tendency to fuel faction and its stifling, unnatural vision of life.

In this chapter I also summarize the main features of Hume's alternative account, i.e., his ethic of common life rooted in social praise and blame, which is made possible by our capacity for sympathy. I show why he thinks that his secular moral philosophy is better able to explain the nature of morality, the way we come to identify goodness, and why we should be (and to varying degrees already are) motivated to pursue a life of virtue. I also show why he would take his account to have the additional benefit of countering that which he finds to be harmful in Christian morality.

Chapter Three: Hume's Rehabilitation of Pride as a Virtue and His Critique of Christian Humility

In Chapter Three I present Hume's rehabilitation of pride as a virtue and show how it is of a piece with, and indeed integral to, his secular ethic of ordinary life. I first explain how Hume conceives of pride as a virtue, showing how it is distinct from but related to what Hume calls the passion of pride and distinguishing it from what Hume regards as vicious forms of pride. I then show how pride is essential to Hume's moral philosophy by explaining its role in Hume's account of moral epistemology and of moral motivation. More specifically, I describe how pride is important for moral knowledge because the security provided by a stable self-esteem enables the development of extensive sympathy, which Hume regards as the condition for the possibility of making moral judgments. I also show how pride functions in Hume's moral philosophy as the ultimate source of motivation—namely, how the desire for positive self-survey becomes central to his account of why we should desire to be good, even in cases when we would appear to benefit through vice. Since I explain in Chapter Two that Hume's accounts of extensive sympathy and virtuous pride replace the roles traditionally ascribed to God in religious accounts of morality, it thus becomes visible in Chapter Three just how crucial the virtue of pride is to Hume's secularization of morality.

I next put forward Hume's account of the vice of humility, explaining its relation to the passion of humility. I also distinguish it from modesty, which Hume regards as an important mark of good breeding that serves to mitigate the offense caused by open displays of pride. I show that Hume understands humility as habitual self-denigration, and regards it as a 'monkish virtue' because he thinks that it is believed to be good only when viewed through the distorting lenses of religious superstition. I then explore the

ways in which Hume sees humility as a particularly damaging vice. Not only does it contribute to the personal misery of those who seek to inculcate it, but it also clouds one's moral acuity by disrupting the normal operations of the passions, which for Hume, form the basis of our capacity for sympathy and of our awareness of what contributes to the happiness and well-being of others. The detrimental ramifications of humility are thus social as well as individual.

Finally, I assess Hume's critiques of humility in light of how humility is actually understood within the Christian tradition. I argue that Hume is right to see certain conceptions of Christian humility (most especially in the hyper-Augustinian, voluntarist trajectory) as harmful. I also contend, however, that Hume's portrayal of humility conceals the ways in which many Christian thinkers (particularly in the Christian humanist tradition) would, in fact, agree with Hume in condemning self-deprecation and approving of proper self-love. At the end of this chapter, I therefore seek to locate the real points of agreement and contention between Hume and Aquinas with respect to the phenomena underlying their different ways of understanding the terms pride and humility. Indeed, despite substantial agreement with respect the moral significance of security of selfhood and positive self-assessment, they crucially differ with respect to 1) whether the self is best conceived 'immanently,' i.e., solely in relation to other human persons or whether the self also stands in relation to God, 2) whether attempting to find one's security in God is an immature and illusory way of dealing with fear and suffering or whether God is the deepest ground for the self, and 3) whether going beyond the human or closing the window to a transcendent moral source primarily contributes to or undermines flourishing. I address these crucial differences in the final three chapters.

Chapter Four: The Passion of Pride and Problems for Flourishing

Insofar as Chapters Two and Three discuss Hume's critiques of religious morality and Christian morality in particular, the focus prior to Chapter Four is to identify some of the genuine dangers that religion (specifically Christianity) can pose to flourishing and the corresponding contributions of Hume's secularization of ethics for human life. What is lost in Hume's rejection of Christian humility and, relatedly, in his immanentized ethic and conception of the self, however, becomes clearer upon a deeper exploration of his account of the passions of pride and humility in Book II of the *Treatise*. Thus, in Chapter Four I consider Hume's account of pride more fully in order to examine some of the problems for flourishing that can arise due to the natural desire for pride that is rooted in our human nature. This will lay the foundation for appreciating, in Chapter Five, some of the limitations of Hume's secular ethic precisely because he insists that we remain within the confines of so-called "common life."

In order to see the problems that our desire for pride can pose for flourishing, I devote the first section of this chapter to presenting and developing upon Hume's account of the passions of pride and humility. Hume understands the passion of pride to be a pleasurable (and humility to be a painful) impression of the self that arises when we stand in relation to some pleasurable (or painful) quality or object. (For example, if we take pleasure in virtue, beauty, or wealth, and we are virtuous, beautiful, or wealthy, we feel a corresponding pleasure (i.e., pride) in ourselves.) Hume furthermore contends that these passions are not only pervasive in human life but that they acutely matter for us. Pride and humility arise not only in relation to the objects that support these passions, however. Hume also observes that due to the natural sympathy we have with others, our

sentiment-informed self-assessments are strongly influenced by the perceptions of others. Moreover, the passions of pride and humility are motivationally significant since we naturally desire to feel positive about ourselves and wish to avoid shame. Hume's account thus rightly implies that pride and humility, as well as social approval and disapproval, are very important for understanding human identity-formation and human action.

In light of our natural desire for a stable pride before others, I then consider some of the ways in which the passions of pride and humility can lead to three interrelated problems for flourishing. First, I look at the desire for pride in relation to moral epistemology. For Hume the desire for pride can inhibit moral insight, insofar as it can prompt those sorts of comparisons with others that in turn displace the extensive sympathy needed for sound moral judgments. Second, I look at the way in which the desire for pride can play a role in hampered individual flourishing, as when a person suffers from crippling shame and social rejection. I also look at vicious ways of seeking to bolster insufficient pride, which further contributes to social dysfunction and to psychological unrest in the individual. Third, I explore Hume's account of how the desire for pride tends to excite those passions which can be especially detrimental to social flourishing: passions such as envy and malice, as well as undue hatred, anger, and contempt. I show also how Hume's account of our natural sympathy can explain how these problems caused by the desire for pride can become socially inscribed, as for example, when moral blindness becomes widespread, when an individual's self-worth is negatively and unjustly impaired because the class to which they belong is culturally undervalued, or when maintaining collective pride is at work in perpetuating social

faction. Chapters Five and Six will explore the degrees to which Hume's secular ethic (and a virtuous pride in one's character) and a Christian humanist ethic (and its affirmation of a magnanimous humility) have the resources for addressing these problems.

Chapter Five: The Limitations of Hume's Account of Pride as a Virtue

As I show in Chapter Four, these three problems for flourishing that arise due to our natural desire for the passion of pride (i.e., our need for a stable security before others), stem from our propensity to engage in sympathy-displacing comparisons with others, a propensity that Hume notes is pervasive in our social life (T 2.1.6.4, 191). A key question I therefore consider in Chapter Five is: To what extent does Hume's secular perspective have the conceptual tools for motivating a wider, more extensive sympathy, particularly in light of our tendency to attempt to secure our pride through vicious comparisons with others?

Since prideful concern for character functions as the ultimate source of moral motivation in Hume's secular ethic, I focus on the degree to which virtuous pride, as Hume understands it, can motivate this wider sympathy. I argue that Hume's attempt to account for the moral life through giving a 'science of man' (a move that allows him to avoid giving answers to the larger metaphysical questions), deprives him of the means of defending the moral objectivity that I argue is needed to make adequate sense of why we should seek to extend our sympathy in the first place. Moreover, I contend that Hume must smuggle in concepts that go beyond what his "scientific" approach allows him to say in order to explain how prideful concern for character can serve as the ultimate source of moral motivation and, hence, as a source that could motivate an extensive

sympathy over our tendency to secure unjust pride through comparison. I, furthermore, show that even if Hume's framework could philosophically support these key features of his moral philosophy, there in fact remain deep ambiguities in Hume's notion of virtuous pride itself, due precisely to his separation of ethics from the larger metaphysical worldview that could inform it. These ambiguities, I show, make it unclear how far prideful concern for character should require us to extend our sympathy on Hume's account. For these reasons I therefore maintain that Hume has quite limited resources for responding to the significant problems for flourishing (indeed, the very problems he sought to address with his secular ethic) that arise from our desire for the passion of pride.

Chapter Six: The Significance of Christian Humanist Humility

The limitations of Hume's secular ethic, however, become clearer when compared with the resources that the Christian humanist tradition has for responding to the problems that our natural desire for the passion of pride poses for flourishing. Despite the *philosophical* lacunas in Hume's immanent framework, I argue in Chapter Five that his account of human nature can explain *psychologically* how we might come to judge that we ought to extend our sympathy over and against temptations to vicious forms of pride, as well as how prideful concern for character can serve to motivate a wider, more extensive sympathy. In Chapter Six, therefore, I need to show that Hume's inability to articulate the grounds for a genuine normative demand for widening our sympathy and to give a clear account of noble pride both have important (though often subtle) practical consequences.

A comparison between Hume and Aquinas's Christian humanism brings this out. I show that teleological accounts of the cosmos and of virtue as constitutive of achieving the human telos, such as Aquinas's, can explain moral objectivity and moral motivation in a way that Hume's reductively scientific, non-teleological account cannot. Additionally, Aquinas's teleological picture is situated within a Christian understanding of reality, which sees love as central to God's nature as well as to human fulfillment—a view that shapes the believer's understanding of the aims of the moral life and what true flourishing consists in. I contend that this Christian framework, if it can be believed in, can better inspire the sort of wider sympathy needed to cope with the problems for flourishing that arise due to our natural desire for the passion of pride by, for instance, directing our attention to the value of others, informing our moral imagination, providing resources for persisting in virtue when it is difficult to do so, and encouraging a higher moral aspiration.

As part of this comparison between Hume's secular and Aquinas's Christian humanist moral perspectives, I look at how Aquinas's account of humility (as well as his account of magnanimity) is especially suited for countering the destructive potential that our desire for the passion of pride carries with it than is Hume's much thinner conception of the virtue of modesty (and his ambiguous conception of noble pride). I do show, however, that Hume's secular framework does allow for a more robust account of virtuous modesty (or humility, as I prefer to call it) and a modified account of virtuous pride that could, if cultivated, go further in mitigating the problems caused by improper pride than could Hume's account of these virtues. I thus argue that Hume's conceptions of pride and modesty stand in need of some correction and that a secular account of

virtuous humility is very important for promoting human flourishing. I also argue,

however, that a Christian humanist moral perspective and the conception of humility that

it supports has deeper resources for encouraging a wider sympathy than does this

modified, richer account of secular humility. I conclude, then, that that just as Hume

criticizes the Christian tradition for the way in which humility can undermine individual

and social flourishing, his own secular moral philosophy carries its own unique threats to

flourishing in both respects.

Conclusion: Humility, Religion, and Human Flourishing

I conclude by briefly considering where this study leaves us. I summarize

Hume's critiques of religious morality, and I highlight what I see to be of great value in

those concerns as well as ways in which I think Hume's position lacks appropriate and

crucial nuance. I emphasize how Hume's worries better target hyper-Augustinianism

rather than Christian humanism, and in so doing, I review why I think that Christian

humanism offers a better way of conceiving of the relationship between faith and reason,

religion and morality. (I also suggest that there are broader implications of these

theological categories for thinking about religion and morality more generally, i.e.,

beyond the Christian tradition.) I nevertheless show why I think Hume's insight into the

nature of the passion of pride and its significance in human life can help to explain the

dangerous potential of religion as such (even its better forms) and indeed of any high

ideal or perspective that could engender religious-like fervor. I argue, though, that

Hume's lower-aspiring, secular ethic, while able to offer needed and enduring critiques

of religious and high-aspiring secular moral visions, carries its own threats to

flourishing. I furthermore contend that in light of the dangers to which Hume's lower-

aspiring, secular ethic is prey, his secular moral tradition stands in need of the kind of critiques that a religious perspective, such as Christian humanism, can offer. I therefore conclude that appreciative and enduring dialogue between religious and secular moral perspectives are needed for human flourishing, and that we must work toward articulating and cultivating virtuous humility to make such dialogue possible.

The Need for This Study:

Although some philosophers have argued for the significance of religion for human flourishing,[16] there is a dominant sense in much scholarship and among academics in general that religion is rightly seen as peripheral to the moral life and human well-being. Many also hold that religion positively impedes flourishing and thus that human progress involves getting beyond it. These latter two views seem to be quite widespread among many important Hume scholars. Accordingly, while the value of Hume's secularization of ethics has, I think, been rightly appreciated in the secondary literature, its dangers have not been adequately noted.

The insufficient critical assessment of Hume's attempt to render larger metaphysical questions irrelevant to our moral life, surfaces in the very way in which Hume scholars tend to discuss Hume's account of pride and humility. Many Hume scholars have indeed noticed that Hume inverts and redefines the traditional Christian moral categories of pride and humility.[17] There has not, however, been a thorough study of Hume's modification of pride and humility and of the issues that surround this shift.

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[16] Charles Taylor, who deeply shapes the sort of argument I am making in this dissertation, is noteworthy in this regard (see his *Sources of the Self* and, especially, *A Secular Age*).

[17] See, for example, Annette Baier (1991, 207); Páll Árdal (1989b, 390-91); Christopher Brooke (2012, 178); Robert Manzer (1996, 338-39); Craig Beam (1996, 311); Gabriele Taylor (1981, 394), to name a few.

Moreover, almost without exception when the religious implications of Hume's inversion are mentioned, there is no sense given that Hume's critique of humility as a monkish virtue seriously misconstrues a dominant Christian understanding of that character trait,[18] or that humility (as understood in a Christian humanist framework) helps to facilitate a wider, more extensive sympathy—i.e., the sort of sympathy upon which a Humean account of the moral life depends. Second, although some scholars have noted the difficulties that our desire for social approval (i.e., a pride supported by the perceptions of others) can pose for human flourishing and have questioned the degree to which Hume can address these problems from within his ethical framework, to my knowledge there has been no serious attempt to consider how the very religious tradition and key virtue that Hume (understandably) rejects might be able to speak to precisely these problems.

The lack of sufficiently critical commentary on Hume's secular moral philosophy among Hume scholars also becomes apparent in the ways in which Hume's objections to religious morality are sometimes discussed. This in large part stems, I think, from insufficient awareness of the differences between hyper-Augustinian conceptions of Christian morality and Christian humanist conceptions and a sense that if the former is shown to be untenable, then Christian morality (or, more generally, the notion that morality is to some degree dependent on religion, whether natural or revealed) can be rejected wholesale.[19] We see this, for example, when David Fate Norton offers only the

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[18] Gabriele Taylor, however, does mention in passing that Hume's jab at the religious or traditional conceptions of pride and humility in the *Treatise* 3.3.2.13 "is mistaken in assimilating pride the passion to pride the sin" (1981, 394).

[19] Since hyper-Augustinianism was dominant in Hume's social and academic context, the conceptual possibilities that a Christian humanist perspective can offer are sometimes missed, I think, in the debates in which Hume was engaged as well.

objections posed to Hume's attempt to establish the autonomy of morality from religion

by those who embrace divine command theory (which, as noted, was widely accepted by

followers of the (hyper-Augustinian) Protestant Reformers) (1991, 47-58). Norton fails

to engage, however, the sorts of answers to how and why religion is important for

morality as articulated within the Christian humanist tradition, and it is these, I think,

that present the more formidable and interesting challenges to Hume's secular moral

philosophy.

Commentators also show inadequate acquaintance with the conceptual

possibilities that a Christian humanist perspective offers when they indicate that the

belief that atheists (or non-Christians) can acquire genuine virtue and can come to

identify virtue through their own resources signals a fundamental break with

Christianity,[20] when in fact this view is endorsed, with certain qualifications, by

Christian humanists. These mistakes are really two sides of the same coin: if Christian

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[20] For example, at a key moment in a chapter entitled "Morality without Religion," Paul Russell says, "Religious philosophers are mistaken, therefore, when they claim that the autonomy of morals can be secured only by embracing skeptical and pessimistic views about human nature and morality [i.e., as the views of Hobbes and Mandeville who conceive of morality is mere convention]. In this way, Hume's 'science of man' serves to vindicate the possibility and reality of (genuine) virtuous atheism" (2008, 255). As will be more apparent in Chapter One, hyper-Augustinians rather than Christian humanists, take a pessimistic view of human nature and because of this, they are skeptical of genuine virtue among atheists; grace is necessary, they think, for true virtue, and what may look like virtue in an atheist is really a glittering mask that is worn in ultimate service of pride or self-interest. Christian humanists, who grant that morality has partial-autonomy from religion, do not deny that atheists can be virtuous and indeed more virtuous than many religious believers. But the affirmation that atheists can be virtuous does not conceptually commit one to the view that ethics is not ultimately dependent upon, for example, God or a teleologically-ordered cosmos (as I will discuss in Chapters Five and Six).

Michael Gill 2008 also seems to regard the belief that atheists can be virtuous as pushing a heterodox view. See his treatment of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, which he summarizes on p. 207. Even if Gill is right that such views historically paved the way for secular ethics, I find that he does not seem to adequately comprehend the theological possibilities that a Christian humanist ethical perspective can provide. He is too apt, I think, to suggest that a secular ethic is the logical outworking of what he calls the Positive Answer to the human nature question, in part, I think, because he seems to lack sufficient awareness of how the belief that we can identify and pursue the good by our own power can (with the right qualifications) be genuinely reconciled with a Christian moral perspective (see, for example, his discussion of the Cambridge Platonists in his chapter entitled "The Emergence of Non-Christian Ethics" (pp. 58-74)).

morality is equated with divine command theory or in general understood with hyper-Augustinian categories, the view that humans by nature have the capacity to identify the good and to progress virtue will be wrongly seen as posing a fundamental affront to a Christian moral perspective. Since it is very evident to most of us now that genuine virtue can be had regardless of one's beliefs about God, it is easy to reject a Christian moral perspective (implicitly understood in hyper-Augustinian terms) as obviously false without noticing that there is an alternate Christian position that can be fruitfully explored.[21]

Finally, many scholars seem to follow Hume (and many of Hume's contemporaries) in assuming that the primary way God would be motivationally important is that it motivate moral action by its promise of an eternal reward and its threat of eternal punishment.[22] Because this seems to instrumentalize the moral life by making it a means to a seemingly external reward and because he thinks such remote

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[21] What is fundamentally at odds with Christianity is the view that we can wholly identify all the virtues needed for flourishing apart from faith (e.g., faith is needed to recognize the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, as genuine virtues) and wholly attain virtue apart from grace. (Note that the conviction that a full conception of the virtues depend upon faith as well as reason and that grace plays a role in virtue does not entail that Christians are morally superior to atheists.) Whether we can fully discern all virtues by use of reason alone and, also, whether God or a teleological conception of the cosmos is ultimately needed to make sense of our moral phenomenology to begin with are, I think, the more interesting questions that become lost by identifying Christianity with hyper-Augustinianism and subsequently rejecting it.

[22] This, too, may be because of the dominance of the hyper-Augustinian tradition in eighteenth-century English-speaking Europe. See Jennifer Herdt's account of how Augustine's eudaimonism enables him to avoid the charge that the notion of heaven entails that our "actions have no intrinsic connection to eternal life but are a means to a goal external to themselves" (2008, 53; see 53-46). She points out, however, that, starting with Scotus and continuing in the hyper-Augustinian line, heaven comes to seem more like an external reward (l04-6). This occurs, she argues, because Scotus's break with eudaimonism makes happiness irrelevant to right action. When happiness and morality come apart, then the happiness of eternal life looks more like an external reward than the continuation and culmination of the longing for and joy in goodness (for God) begun in this life.

For literature that suggests that the primary or only way religion could be thought to be significant for moral motivation is by ensuring eternal reward and punishment, see Norton (2006, 157-58; 1991, 49-50) and Russell (2008, 259). Gaskin does mention how, "since the theist lives with his god in a reciprocal relationship of love, he is strongly and personally obligated to do good and avoid evil" (1979, 149), but instead of exploring what the loss of this conception might mean, he focuses on eternal reward and punishment (1979, 150) and explains why Hume would deny its importance (1979, 153-55).

promises are not necessary and, in any case, fail to motivate virtuous action, Hume

believes that there is no significant motivational loss in shifting to a secular approach to

ethics.[23] I will show, however, that Hume misconstrues the primary way in which

religion factors into moral motivation, and ironically as a consequence, he is not

appropriately aware of the shortcomings in his own account of moral motivation. Again,

however, Hume's commentators so often miss these issues because they fail to note the

ways in which religion can inspire moral formation and action beyond arousing concern

about how we will fare in the final judgment. Through this study I thus hope to

contribute an appreciative yet critical perspective that provides what I think is a needed

counter-voice to some of these discussions.

A Preliminary Note on the Terms Pride and Humility:

Finally, before beginning a study on Hume's secular transformation of pride and

humility, it will be helpful to bring some clarity to the terms themselves.[24] Unlike terms

for other character traits that unambiguously denote virtues or vices (e.g., courage and

justice always refer to virtue, whereas rashness and greed to vice), the terms pride and

humility can each be used to designate virtue or vice. Calling a person prideful may

express disapprobation, as when we regard them to be arrogant, haughty, pompous, vain,

and the like. On the other hand, we speak of pride approvingly when we say, for

example, "Have you no pride?!"; here pride refers to an important sense of dignity and

integrity, the lack of which is vicious. Likewise, we speak approvingly of the humility of

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[23] See Norton for why Hume's position would lead him to regard the prospect of eternal reward or punishment as instrumentalizing the virtues (2006, 157-58; 1991, 49-50); on this point, see also Gaskin 1979, p. 150. For Hume's arguments for why eternal life is neither necessary, nor has the motivational benefit that it is purported to have, see the *Dialogues* XII, pp. 122-24, and the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, XI, pp. 140, 146-47. I interpret these passages in Chapter Two.

[24] Here I have in mind these terms as they refer to character traits rather than to passions.

a great human being who joyfully and earnestly acknowledges her indebtedness to others and who does not call attention to her greatness but treats others with genuine respect and interest. But the term humility can also have negative connotations as when we say that a self-effacing, servile person has too much humility.

This variation in language reveals not only the obvious point that there are different conceptions of what counts as the virtuous and vicious stances we can take towards ourselves—a point I will discuss in a moment. It also shows that we sometimes can use the same word to refer to the virtue and its vicious excess. In what follows, I want to offer a basic framework for thinking about virtuous pride and virtuous humility (twin virtues that I think necessarily hang together) as well as their vicious extremes. While the content of virtuous and vicious ways of relating to oneself is deeply contested, providing this framework will help bring out what is at stake in the moral phenomena that underlie the various ways the terms pride and humility are used. Doing so will also set the stage for a sketch of secular humility I want briefly to develop in Chapter Six.

I suggest that pride, whether proper or excessive, pertains to the phenomena of greatness, dignity, strength, importance, and the ways in which we are independent or self-determining or self-sufficient. The person who has virtuous pride rightly recognizes and has the proper affective responses to these features of herself, whereas the person with excessive pride overestimates and places too much affective attention on her merits, perceived importance, or independence. By contrast, humility, whether proper or excessive, pertains to our smallness, weakness, limitations, powerlessness, vulnerability, dependency, and mistakes and moral failings. The person with virtuous humility rightly recognizes and has the proper affective acceptance of these features of herself, whereas a

person with vicious humility underestimates her worth and capacity and feels excessively dejected by her failings.

Since successes and failures, self-reliance and dependence, and so on are unavoidably part of the human condition to which we must somehow stand in relation, it becomes clear that an adequate account of virtuous self-assessment must give some account of *both* the phenomena of virtuous pride and virtuous humility, even if these phenomena are given different names by various thinkers. Aquinas, for example, specifies that what he means by 'pride' is the vicious extreme, whereby we have an inordinate desire for our own excellence in a manner opposed to right reason (ST II-II:161.1; II-II:162.4) and speaks of magnanimity as possessing greatness of soul, striving to do that which is deserving of honor, and regarding great honors as something of which one is worthy, if one is in fact worthy of them (ST II-II:129.1; II-II:129.1.r3; see also a2, aa.; II-II:129.2.r3). Hume understands humility as a character trait to be the tendency to underrate our worth and thus condemns it as a vice, but he does regard modesty—which he defines as a "just sense of our weakness" (T 3.3.2.1)—to be a virtue. While both have significantly different accounts of what is involved in what they respectively call magnanimity/pride and humility/modesty, and while they use different terms to denote the relevant virtues and vices, both have an account proper and improper ways of standing in relation to our strengths and weaknesses.

Not only must an adequate account of proper self-assessment include an account of virtuous forms of both pride and humility, but it also becomes clear that these virtues are inseparably linked. If pride is to be proportionate to our merits and strengths, it must be accompanied by proper humility. Pride is excessive if, for example, it fails to

recognize the contributions of others for one's successes or that regards those successes to be more important than they, in the grand scheme of things, in fact are. Likewise, if humility is to be proportionate to our smallness, vulnerabilities, and failings, it must be accompanied by virtuous pride. A humility that, for instance, fails to appreciate one's worth in spite of failings or one's potential in spite of real limitations is excessive rather than virtuous. Virtuous pride and humility are bound together, each guiding and informing the other.[25]

Another feature of pride and humility is that our conceptions of what counts as their virtuous and vicious manifestations are inherently informed by our larger metaphysical commitments. On the one hand, any religious tradition or spirituality that holds some notion of the sacred, and proper humility in those traditions will include proper reverence towards that which is seen as sacred or holy. For example, because central to Christianity is the view that God is the source of all goodness and the highest object of love, Christians see submission to God as central to virtuous humility. Followers of Confucius give reference to one's ancestors. The deep ecologists advocate seeing oneself within the web of nature and paying due reverence to the natural world of which we are a tiny part by not pridefully overstepping our bounds and upsetting the ecological balance. On the other hand, if one conceives of the cosmos as a godless,

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[25] Some may use one word to refer to proper self-assessment, rather than give two words for its two different faces. For example, for Augustine humility refers to a proper self-assessment in the order of things, and so a right assessment of our greatness and worth (had through God and ultimately to be referred to God) could be seen as an aspect of humility. For Hume, it could be argued, virtuous pride, as a *due* sense of our self-worth, already includes within it an appropriate sense of our limitations and weaknesses, for otherwise our pride would be unjustly excessive (Hume does discuss modesty, but as I show in Chapter Five, Hume's account of modesty arguably has more to do with an outward social grace than it does with an inward stance towards oneself). Moreover, using one term to refer to proper self-assessment may be importantly revelatory (e.g., Augustine's emphasis on humility and Hume's on pride do hit upon core differences in outlook and attitude that reflect their respective religious and secular stances). Nevertheless, I do think it is also clarifying to articulate the two different sides of proper self-assessment, and I continue to do so throughout this dissertation.

merely material universe devoid of objective value or meaning, submission to God or some notion of the sacred may well be seen as vicious humility, a stance that does not rightly recognize and glory in the fact that we create our own values, have the power to shape our lives as we wish, and are not bound by, for example, religious conceptions of morality. We can think of Nietzsche in this vein. Instead, proper pride would be seen to involve embracing and exercising one's power. Hume, who thinks there is good reason to doubt the claims of revealed religion similarly sees humility before God to be a denigration of the human person rather than a virtue (see NHR X, 163-64, and *II*. of Chapter Three).

What we take to be involved in virtuous pride and humility pertains also to our stances towards ourselves as we stand in relation to others. We understand our strengths and weakness in large part in light of our social place, and in many cases feeling superior to others may lie at the base of our sense of pride. Whether and to what extent feeling superior (or inferior) to others is seen as belonging to proper pride is also influenced by one's cosmic outlook. In the Christian tradition, for example, while it is important to recognize one's strengths, there is a sense that all persons are significant, being made in the image of God, that even the strengths one has are in part the gifts of God to be used for the common good rather than for self-aggrandizement, and that it is part of love and of recognizing the dignity of others to put others first rather than grasp at recognition. For Nietzsche, by contrast, a certain appeal to some mysterious notion of human dignity that is not phenomenally manifest is a tactic the weak and degenerate use to secure recognition that they do not deserve.

Our conceptions of pride and humility can also be shaped by differing conceptions of human nature, even within the same general cosmic picture. For example, I have already mentioned how within the Christian tradition, hyper-Augustinians, who see humans as utterly depraved, and Christian humanists, who think that human nature is partially though not wholly marred by sin, have correspondingly different conceptions of the depth of self-mourning that virtuous humility requires. Similarly, although Mandeville and Hume are both secularists, because Mandeville holds a bleak picture of human nature, he sees pride as morally unwarranted and thus vicious, while Hume, who maintains that we have natural sympathy and genuine other-regarding concern, argues that we can take a virtuous pride in our real virtue.

Conceptions of virtuous pride and virtuous humility therefore will vary widely depending upon one's convictions regarding the nature of the human person and our place in the cosmos. Above I suggested that humility has been a neglected virtue since the secularization of ethics because its importance becomes somewhat less intelligible when it is divested of its religious meaning. Perhaps a deeper reason for its neglect, however, is that because conceptions of the nature of proper and excessive pride and humility are especially bound up with how one answers larger metaphysical and religious questions, its content is particularly contestable.[26] Nevertheless, some fruitful (though inherently limited) discourse on the nature of humility can be had on naturalistic grounds, and in Chapter Six I will suggest a secular conception of humility that deepens and modifies Humean modesty (as well as enriches and in some ways corrects his account of virtuous pride) using the resources available from within the confines of

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[26] Leaving larger metaphysical and religious questions aside does not give Hume neutral ground for his conceptions of pride and humility. As will become clear especially in Chapter Six, they are inevitably shaped by the presuppositions involved in his attempt to remain within the scope of "common life."

"common life" as he understands it.[27] It suffices for my purposes here, however, to point

to the underlying phenomena pertaining to pride and humility (i.e., our strengths,

weaknesses, and so on, and ways of relating to them), while also stressing that just what

counts as virtuous and vicious ways of relating to these phenomena can be quite

radically different given how one answers a range of questions about the fundamental

nature of reality.

I hope to show, though, that the very reason clear and productive discussions of

pride and humility can be difficult—namely, the relationship between our sense of the

nature of reality as a whole and our conception of proper self-assessment—is precisely

what makes it a fascinating lens for looking at religious and secularity and their impact

on human flourishing.[28] I will contend that the content of religious (and specifically

Christian humanist) humility carries with it important resources for flourishing that are

lost within Hume's ethics of common life but also that Hume's account of the passion of

pride helps make intelligible some of what can be so destructive about religion. It is

through dialogue between these competing perspectives, I argue, that we can become

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[27] A complete account of virtuous pride and virtuous humility, however, will depend upon what actually is the case with respect to the nature of the cosmos and our place within it, and we of course cannot work towards our best account of our situation if such questions are precluded from our ethical discourse.

[28] I should mention that one's stance on larger religious and metaphysical questions need not be definitive with respect to whether there is or is not a God. Although Hume quite clearly rejected revealed religion and with it the Christian conception of God, he may well have maintained a level of agnosticism (see, e.g., Gaskin 1979, 151, who interprets Hume as denying the existence of deity with moral attributes but does not deny the existence of "all gods whatsoever"). Nevertheless, his definitive conviction *that* we ultimately cannot be certain about our answers to larger metaphysical questions itself informs his conceptions of pride and humility. (For example, he sees religious certainty to be a viciously prideful for failing to appreciate the limitations of our knowledge on these matters. See, for instance, his remark in "Of Miracles" X.1, where Hume says that his argument "must at least *silence* the most *arrogant bigotry* and superstition, and free us from their impertinent solicitations" (EHU X.1, 110, second emphasis mine).) Moreover, even if we embrace an agnostic position, we cannot get away from some form of what Charles Taylor calls 'cosmic imaginaries' (2007, 323); that is, we cannot help but have some backdrop picture of reality within which we (often implicitly) attempt to make sense of our lives. Such background pictures, whether certain or uncertain, whether religiously affirmative, negative, or agnostic, all can shape our sense of virtuous and vicious forms of pride and humility.

better attuned to the pitfalls of both 'immanent' and 'transcendent' moral perspectives and, thus, make ourselves more equipped to avoid them.

CHAPTER ONE: PRIDE AND HUMILITY IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Matthew 12:29

"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet." John 13:14

"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 21:17

"I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:3-4

In order to see what is at stake in Hume's reversal of the traditional Christian categories of pride and humility, it is necessary to begin with an overview of how Christians in the West have broadly understood these character traits. The goal of this chapter is to show how pride and humility are differently understood within the two dominant theological trajectories in Western Christianity: 1) the 'Christian humanist' strand, which holds that, despite our tendencies to sin and self-enclosure, humans are also by nature oriented to God as manifest in our draw to goodness, truth, and beauty, and 2) the 'hyper-Augustinian' strand, which sees human nature as utterly depraved.[1] Doing so will lay the requisite foundation for later showing in Chapter Three that although Hume means to attack Christian humility in general, his critique largely applies only to hyper-Augustinian humility. While Hume's critique is, I argue, important and very much

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[1] The term hyper-Augustinian is coined by Charles Taylor (1989, 246-47). I find it to be a helpful term because, as I will show in *III.*, these thinkers exaggerate and intensify certain key positions in Augustine, which has a direct bearing upon how pride and humility become understood within this trajectory. Jennifer Herdt employs Taylor's term in her book *Putting On Virtue: the Legacy of the Splendid Vices*, a book which has been an indispensible resource for this chapter.

needed, it is incomplete insofar as it fails adequately to engage Christian humanist conceptions of humility. This chapter will thus also provide the necessary background for showing in Chapter Six that it is only when we set Hume's position in conversation with Christian humanist conceptions of humility that the more interesting and difficult issues emerge with respect to religion, selfhood, and human flourishing. Moreover, it will be through this sort of deeper engagement between these rival perspectives that the weaknesses and strengths in both positions will stand out more clearly.

Since my aim in this dissertation is not merely to assess Humean and Christian conceptions of pride and humility but to use these as a vantage point for looking at broader issues pertaining to the relationship among religion, morality, and human flourishing, I will need to explain the background theological positions that undergird and find expression in these divergent conceptions of pride and humility. It will later be clear that Hume's objections to hyper-Augustinian humility are far-reaching in that they also have a bearing on the typical hyper-Augustinian positions on these larger topics. To demonstrate this, however, I need not give a complete treatment of pride and humility in the Christian tradition or even in any Christian thinker's account. Rather, I intend only to summarize how pride and humility come to be differently understood within the two dominant theological frameworks that emerge in the Christian West and to emphasize only those aspects that will be salient to future discussions.

I. Pride and Humility in Augustine

Because an adequate appreciation of the two theological traditions under consideration depends upon a prior understanding of Augustine, whose account of pride and humility has been of decisive importance for the subsequent Christian thinkers, it will

be important to begin by explaining how Augustine makes humility fundamental to his

Christian eudaimonistic conception of morality. In the following two sections I show that

it is precisely the disputes surrounding the theological implications entailed by

Augustine's account of pride and humility that, in part, lead to the emergence of these

two theological streams with their different stances on faith and reason, nature and grace,

religion and morality, and, accordingly, the nature of pride and humility.

In order to grasp just how central the virtue of humility is for Augustine, and why

it became a point of contention for later thinkers, I will first lay out Augustine's Christian

eudaimonism in order later to show how humility is situated within it.[2] Augustine

conceives of ethics as the investigation into the *Summum Bonum*, the supreme good,

which is chosen for its own sake and provides the *beatitude* or happiness for which we all

strive (see CG VIII.3-4, 301-4). Augustine understands this supreme good to be the

Christian God, a God who has invited the human race to participate in his divine life and

love. Since God has made us for friendship with himself, we remain restless and

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[2] Much of contemporary ethics (the revival of virtue ethics being an exception) has been action-centered rather than character-centered, focusing on what it right to do rather than what leads to a good, flourishing life. By contrast, the ethical approach prevalent in ancient and medieval philosophy focuses on the latter of these, making their primary question: What gives true happiness or well-being and what are the traits of character that are constitutive of such happiness? For eudaimonists, happiness is not understood purely in terms of subjective feelings of pleasure but as genuine flourishing, and while flourishing will be pleasurable, it is not reducible to pleasure. (For example, the glutton has sensations of pleasure but he is not living well (is not happy, in the eudaimonist sense) with respect to food. However, the temperate person who knows how to enjoy food in the right measure is objectively thriving or flourishing in this respect and also has the subjective pleasure experience of right eating; he has eudaimonia with regard to food.) A eudaimonist approach to ethics requires that one give an account of human nature, for claims about what it is for the human being to flourish as a human must be grounded in an account of what a human person is, and this is usually articulated in terms of our telos or end (i.e., the answer to the question: What is the purpose of human life?). And our telos, among ancient and medieval eudaimonists, was understood in light of a particular conception of the nature of the cosmos and our place within it. Augustine's account of eudaimonia, for example, depends fundamentally on seeing the human being as a soul made for friendship with God. For him, thus, the moral life (i.e., the good life) consists primarily in virtues that are constitutive of that friendship. Hume, I will later suggest, has something of an ethic of flourishing rooted in an account of human nature. Because, however, he rejects teleology and seeks to account for ethics independent of answers to larger metaphysical questions, I will show in Chapter Five that he faces special problems for accounting for moral motivation—challenges that are relevant to his account of virtuous pride—that do not afflict more traditional eudaimonist ethics.

dissatisfied, alienated from our true home, until we rest in him (C I.i.1, 3).[3] The moral

life, Augustine thus thinks, involves a transformation of our loves so that we come to

love God above all things.

How, then, does the love of other things factor into Augustine's account of the

happy life? While created beings are insufficient for giving us lasting happiness,

everything that exists is made by God and is therefore good (see C VII.xi.17-xii.18) and

worthy of love. Moreover, to love God entails loving what God has made.[4] It is

appropriate, however, to love things in the right order, in the right way, to the right

extent. God is the Good, and is rightly loved above all things. Human persons are made

in the image and likeness of God and are to be loved more than animals, plants, and

inanimate objects, who respectively participate less fully in the being and goodness of

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[3] See also where Augustine says, "Therefore the correct reply to the question, 'Why are the one sort happy?' is 'Because they cling to God'; and to 'Why are those others wretched?' the reply is, 'Because they do not cleave to him.' It follows that there is only one Good which will bring happiness to a rational or intellectual creature; and that Good is God. And so although felicity is not possible for all creatures…, yet those creatures which are capable of it, do not attain it by themselves, being created out of nothing, but receive it from him who created them. In attaining this Good they find their happiness; in losing it they are sunk in misery" (CG XII.1, 471-72).

[4] Augustine does of course insist that we should not love created beings with the kind of love that we owe to God. In *On Christian Teaching* he maintains we should cling to God and seek all our happiness in him (we should love God with the love of *frui*, i.e., enjoyment), and we should love created beings as signs pointing to God, as stepping stones on our journey to God (we should love creation with the love of *uti*, i.e., use). (Augustine qualifies this distinction of loves by explaining the sense in which human persons should be both enjoyed and used. It is worth mentioning here that 'use' is a technical term that should not be equated with the Kantian sense of using something as a means to our own ends. Augustine cannot fully admit that humans can be enjoyed rather than also used, precisely because he has already defined enjoying something as "hold[ing] fast to it in love for its own sake" as our "homeland," as the final resting place of our journey (9), and this could only be God. Augustine does not want to say, however, that other humans should merely be used, even though he does specify that the wrong use of something (such as the Kantian sense of using another *solely* as a means to our ends) is "better termed abuse" (9). What Augustine needs is a way to speak of loving things for themselves while also referring them to God. (Herdt, in fact, argues that the later Augustine is finally able to articulate this by employing the distinction between relative and final ends (2008, 54).) Augustine draws heavily from Plato's notion of the ladder of love given in the *Symposium* and thus emphasizes our love for created things as vehicles that point us upward to their Source, but his concern with our tendency to become wrongly attached to lower things, I think, prevents him from adequately emphasizing that we should seek to participate with God's own love for created things "for their own sake" as it were. It is this latter sort of love that I will discuss in Chapter Six as being one of the ways that a transcendent perspective has something important to offer with respect to its connection to humility and human flourishing.

God (see CG XI.16, 447). As Augustine says, "This is true of everything created; though it is good, it can be loved in the right way or in the wrong way—in the right way, that is, when the proper order is kept, in the wrong way when the order is upset" (CG XV.22, 636). This is why Augustine says that "a brief and true definition of virtue is 'rightly ordered love'" (CG XV.22, 637), and as I will soon show, humility is integral to attaining this right order.

A dominant way in which we tend to upset the proper order of loves is to confuse the utility value something has for us with the intrinsic worth of created beings. While reason can grasp the values that things have in themselves according to the hierarchy of creation, we are often driven by our desires and needs to regard things as valuable insofar as they serve our own narrow purposes (CG XI.16, 447-48). We see this, for example, when a father whose preoccupation with success causes him to neglect his children, with our willingness to buy clothing made by exploited workers, or with the child's taunting of the classroom misfit in order to gain social approval. Thus, while virtue is defined in terms of rightly-ordered loves, sin or human evil is correspondingly defined as a disorder of the will, wherein we lack appropriate love for what is most worthy of it and are inordinately attached to things of lesser value.[5] (The notion of rightly-ordered loves will later become relevant to issues in Hume's moral philosophy.)

Augustine thinks that we have a propensity to be disordered in our loves; though we may make progress towards proper love, wrongly-ordered love marks the human condition in our earthly existence. This is not only because we tend to privilege utility values over intrinsic ones. No matter what the value, we frequently cling to what we love

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[5] Bonnie Kent has a helpful discussion of rightly-ordered loves in Augustine's ethics (2001, 213-217).

with a disordered attachment. Augustine maintains that it is the tendency of love to seek to rest securely in what it loves, and he therefore thinks that unless we love God above all things, we will inevitably seek final security and happiness in lower things (C IV.10.15, 61-62; see Di Lorenzo 358)—be it social prestige, material possessions, amusements, or even other persons. This leads to lack of freedom within ourselves as we become enslaved to our attachments,[6] as well as to social disorder as our inner enslavements cause us to impose our wills upon others in order to satisfy our disordered desires. In other words, disordered loves thwarts both individual and social flourishing.

On Augustine's account, loving God above all things is not only constitutive of true fulfillment. God is also important for our coming to develop rightly-ordered loves all the way down the scale of goods. Augustine thinks this is so, first, because God serves as a transcendent source of goodness in light of which we assess our character, desires, and behaviors.[7] A theme throughout the *Confessions* is that we seek to imitate what we love; from Augustine's specifically Christian standpoint, when we love God, we therefore strive to pattern ourselves after God Incarnate—i.e., Christ—who perfectly manifests rightly-ordered loves in human existence.[8] Second, when we find the ultimate security and fulfillment of resting in the love of God, God becomes the anchor or ground of our being, enabling us to loosen our over-attachments to those things which give us a false sense of significance or a superficial and ephemeral sense of happiness. Third, God's

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[6] Augustine recounts his own struggle to overcome his sexual habit in Book VIII of *Confessions*.

[7] As I will soon show, Augustinian humility is the posture by which we seek to align ourselves with God's will (which involves learning rightly to love that which is truly valuable and to be unencumbered by that which is insignificant). I present this aspect of Augustine's ethics here because later in the dissertation I will explore whether Hume's immanent ethic and his account of the centrality of virtuous pride in motivating the moral life has similar resources for helping us to develop 'rightly-ordered loves.'

[8] Augustine understood imitating Christ, the perfect exemplar of virtue, as simultaneously involving the aspiration and effort of the individual Christian as well as divine grace in bringing Christians in conformity to Christ (Herdt 2008, 12).

grace helps us rightly to love what is truly worthy of love. Augustine understands grace, in part, as God's revelation to the soul of the beauty of goodness (see O'Connell, 100). When we catch sight of the beauty of some higher value, our attachments to lower things weaken by way of feeling the relative dimness of their glitter in comparison to the splendor of more noble goods.[9] Because we cannot, by sheer force of will, command our loves to be made right, Augustine therefore thought that the happiness that comes with forming rightly-ordered loves was not wholly or primarily in our own power but was the gift of God's grace helping to heal our inner division (see C VIII).

It is within this Christian eudaimonistic framework that Augustine understood pride to be the chief vice and humility to be a central virtue, for these two stances fundamentally shape the order of our loves as well as mark the distinction between the heavenly and earthly cities.[10] They play such a crucial role precisely because Augustine defines them first and foremost in relation to God: humility designates the posture of loving receptivity to God,[11] whereas pride denotes the refusal to submit to him and of making oneself the center of one's loves (CG XIV.13, 571-73). In what follows, I will elaborate upon what is involved in the virtue of humility and the vice of pride, and I will show why Augustine sees them as so morally significant.

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[9] See this aspect of Augustine's account of grace (God's beauty revealed to the soul) in Book VIII of *Confessions*, wherein Augustine tells of a crucial moment in his own transformation.

[10] See, for example, where Augustine says, "That is why humility is highly prized in the City of God and especially enjoined on the City of God during the time of its pilgrimage in this world; and it receives particular emphasis in the character of Christ, the king of that City (cf. Phil 2, 8-11). We are also taught by the sacred Scriptures that the fault of exaltation [i.e., pride], the contrary of humility, exercises supreme dominion in Christ's adversary, the Devil. This is assuredly the great difference that sunders the two cities of which we are speaking: the one is a community of devout men, the other a company of the irreligious, and each has its own angels attached to it. In one city love of God has been given first place, in the other, love of self" (CG XIV.13, 573).

[11] As Augustine says, "devout humility makes the mind subject to what is superior. Nothing is superior to God; and that is why humility exalts the mind by making it subject to God" (CG XIV.13, 572). He similarly says, "Now it is good to 'lift up your heart', and to exalt your thoughts, yet not in the self-worship of pride, but in the worship of God. This is a sign of obedience, and obedience can belong only to the humble" (CG XIV.13, 572).

Augustine regards pride, i.e., the rejection of our creaturely status and the attempt to make ourselves our final resting place, to be the first sin. It was the desire to be like God—not in holy imitation but to possess God's characteristics as one's own—that motivated the sin of Adam and Eve (see CG XIV.13, 571-73) as well as Lucifer's rebellion (CG XIV.11, 569).[12] This first sin dramatically illustrates the cataclysmic character of pride for the human soul, since Augustine understands pride to be the first disorder of the will,[13] disrupting the scale of value by elevating the self and denigrating God. As Augustine says,

> And what is pride except a longing for a perverse kind of exaltation? For it is a perverse kind of exaltation to abandon the basis on which the mind should be firmly fixed, and to become, as it were, based on oneself, and so remain. This happens when a man is too pleased with himself: and a man is self-complacent when he deserts that changeless Good in which, rather than in himself, he ought to have found his satisfaction. (CG XIV.13, 571-72)[14]

This first disorder, in turn, leads to further disorder and misery, for Augustine thinks that as we abandon God and give rein to our desires, we eventually become enslaved to them. He says,

> …he who in his pride had pleased himself was by God's justice handed over to himself. But the result of this was not that he was in every way under his own control, but that he was at odds with himself, and lived a life of harsh and pitiable slavery, instead of the freedom he so ardently desired, a slavery under him with whom he entered into agreement in his sinning. (CG XIV.15, 575)

In short, from Augustine's Christian eudaimonist perspective, no stance is more opposed both to morality as well as to genuine happiness as is pride; for turning from the author of

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[12] "But after that, the arrogant angel came, envious because of that pride of his, who had for the same reason turned away from God to follow his own leading. With the proud disdain of a tyrant he chose to rejoice over his subjects rather than to be a subject himself; and so he fell from the spiritual paradise" (CG XIV.11, 569).

[13] "Now, could anything but pride have been the start of the evil will? For 'pride is the start of every kind of sin' (Ecclus. 10:13)" (CG XIV.13, 571).

[14] Or again, "This then is the original evil: man regards himself as his own light, and turns away from that light which would make man himself a light if he would set his heart on it" (CG XIV.13, 573).

our being is the ultimate disorder of love, one that underscores further disorder. It is a turn by which we reject our deepest source of fulfillment (God), and since through pride we give priority to our own wayward desires, it is leads us to form detrimental habits that in turn bind up the will, preventing us from rightly loving and pursuing what will truly make us happy and free.[15]

This internal disorder caused by pride is not only constitutive of personal misery; pride also leads to social factions, as its self-oriented stance prompts us to dominate others in order to satisfy our own desires (CG XII.1, 471-72).[16] This may be through vying for the most esteemed positions, seeking self-importance through gaining power over others, unjustly taking more than our share out of a self-centered inattention to the needs of others, and so on. The social ramifications of pride are explored in *City of God*, and indeed, pride, i.e., the rejection of God and the corresponding elevation of self, is the posture that renders us members of the earthly city rather than the heavenly (CG XIV.13, 573). It is precisely because the prideful self, rather than God, reigns in the earthly city that this city can never have true or lasting peace among its members, Augustine argues.

Humility, by contrast, is fundamental to Augustine's whole account of how we pursue goodness and happiness, for it is the posture by which we rest in and seek to be

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[15] See Augustine's account of his own divided will in Book VIII of *Confessions*, and see the role that pride and self-orientation in his youth play in his coming to form disordered habits that then make him miserably unfree.

[16] See CG XIX.14, 874 where Augustine links pride to lust for domination. And although Augustine is discussing the demons in the following passage, his account of their fall holds true for the effects of pride in the earthly city as well:

> The contrasted aims of the good and evil angels…had its origin in their wills and desires, the one sort persisting resolutely in that Good which is common to all—which for them is God himself—and in his eternity, truth, and love, while the others were delighted rather with their own power, as though they themselves were their own Good. Thus they have fallen away from that Supreme Good which is common to all, which brings felicity, and they have devoted themselves to their own ends. They have chosen pride in their own elevation in exchange for the certainty of truth; the spirit of faction instead of unity in love; and so they have become arrogant, deceitful, and envious. The cause of the bliss of the others is their adherence to God; and so the cause of the misery of the apostates must be taken to be the exact contrary, their failure to adhere to him. (CG XII.1, 471-72)

guided by God, who is our true home (CG XIV.13, 572-73). Furthermore, as explained above, God is necessary for acquiring rightly ordered loves all the way down the scale of goods, and humility just is the mode by which we seek to align ourselves to the will of God and acknowledge our dependence on him for moral and spiritual growth. Correspondingly, in contrast to the inner division caused by pride's part in forming disordered loves, humility's role in our forming rightly-ordered loves leads to internal wholeness and freedom. Humility is also bound up with facilitating social peace, for to have properly ordered loves involves treating others as bearers of God's image who are worthy of love, not as beings upon which to impose one's will or to neglect out of pursuit of a lower good. This is why humility is a defining characteristic of the members of the heavenly city (CG XIV.13, 573), for the heavenly city is ruled by God and likewise knows the true peace that comes from its members seeking to serve each other out of love. (Note, therefore, that in contrast to Hume, Augustine sees humility as necessary for individual and social flourishing, and pride as the surest route to misery and conflict, both within the person and among persons.)

For Augustine, therefore, humility is foundational to the life of virtue and to flourishing: it is important for right relations to God and to others, as well as for true fulfillment and wholeness within ourselves. But the implications of his account of humility leave in its wake a history of theological contention, surfacing in the two previously mentioned theological trajectories and their respective positions on the relationship between faith and reason as well as religion and morality, which in turn influence their divergent conceptions of pride and humility.

The consequence of Augustine's account of pride and humility that led to subsequent theological ferment is his famous conclusion that, in the end, pagan virtue is merely glittering vice.[17] Although Augustine's inability to grant pagans true virtue primarily stems from the fact that he characterizes virtue in such a way that makes loving God essential to it, the connection Augustine draws between loving God and the upward turn of humility therefore ties humility to virtue in a necessary way as well. To be more specific, the relationship between humility and Augustine's stance on pagan virtue is as follows: Augustine, as we have seen, defines virtue as rightly-ordered love. Since, however, he regards loving God above all else (and the corresponding posture of humility before God) to be fundamental to right order, the actions and intentions of pagans show up as inherently disordered, and disordered, moreover, at the most important level. For Augustine, nothing can be rightly loved apart from recognizing that all goods are dependent upon and ordered to the true (i.e., Christian) God. Thus, apparent pagan virtue is, and can only ever be, splendid vice.

Augustine does acknowledge that the best pagan Romans genuinely acted for the sake of the common good and, as John Rist notes, Augustine "seems to wish to assert that, if a choice must be made, such acts must be classed as vices rather than virtues, but to recoil from condemning them outright as vicious" (172).[18] In Book V of the *City of God*, for example, Augustine approves of those Romans who "took no account of their own material interests compared with the common good; … resisted the temptations of avarice; … acted for their country's well-being with disinterested concern; … were guilty

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[17] Jennifer Herdt traces the legacy of the "splendid vices" in her book *Putting on Virtue*, and her treatment of Augustine's position on pagan virtue is excellent. From this point to the end of the section I draw heavily from her her discussion of it (see pp. 45-50).
[18] Quoted in Herdt 2008, p. 46.

of no offence against the law; [and] succumbed to no sensual indulgence" (CG V.15, 204-5), and he even holds them up as models for Christians (CG V.16-17, 205-6). Augustine also affirms that pagans can develop in virtue insofar as they progress from the desire to impose their will upon others to the desire for human praise, and then from desiring to attain human praise by whatever means to desiring to be praised by the virtuous for genuine merit (CG V.19, 212-13). In these ways Augustine suggests that pagans can possess virtues in a qualified sense,[19] and he does, moreover, refer to certain deeds performed by pagans as virtuous (CG V.17.6, 206; V.18, 211).

Even so, Augustine also asserts that "no one can have true virtue without true piety, that is without the true worship of the true God" (CG V.19, 213). This is not only because love for the common good is, on Augustine's view, perverted if such love is not ordered to God. Augustine also suspects that when we fail to make God our final resting place, the love, which is properly owed him inevitably collapses in on ourselves, making the self one's final object of love. Augustine thereby sets up a dichotomy between the possible direction of our loves, a dichotomy which bears immense weight, for, as we saw, it defines the heavenly and earthly cities, and it implies humility or pride as their respective stances: *either* we love and are humbly submissive to God *or*, in the absence of it, we set ourselves up as "gods," manifesting pride by tacitly or overtly seeking self-exaltation. He says, for example,

> Thus the virtues which the mind imagines it possesses, by means of which it rules
> the body and the vicious elements, are themselves vices rather than virtues, if the

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[19] Augustine often signals such qualification by referring to the "moral qualities" of pagans (CG V.12, 199, scare quotes are included in the text) or by mentioning "qualities that approach more nearly to the true ideal of virtue" (CG V.12, 200). He also grants that although "the virtue which is employed in the service of human glory is not true virtue; still, those who are not citizens of the Eternal City…are of more service to the earthly city when they possess even that sort of virtue than if they are without it" (CG V.19, 213).

mind does not bring them into relation with God in order to achieve anything whatsoever and to maintain that achievement. For although the virtues are reckoned by some people to be genuine and honourable when they are related only to themselves and are sought for no other end, even then they are puffed up and proud, and so are to be accounted vices rather than virtues. (CG XIX.25, 891)

It is therefore no surprise that Augustine criticizes even the pagans he praises for their prideful concern for their own glory (CG V.12-20, 196-215). Augustine's final analysis, then, is that all pagans, even in their apparent virtue that is based on genuine (if still ultimately disordered) love of the common good, are guilty of acting also for the sake of praise and positive self-image rather than for God's sake (see CG V.15, V.17, 204, 206).[20] The pride and vicious self-orientation of wanting to possess glory for oneself and the failure to recognize our dependency on God, for Augustine, contaminate even the greatest of pagan virtue (see CG V.19, 214).

II. Pride and Humility in the Christian Humanist Tradition as Represented by Aquinas

The theologians after Augustine that I wish to discuss in this dissertation retain in their sense of humility its primary definition as submission to God as well as its acknowledgement of our finitude, moral failings, and dependency on God for grace. Likewise, various Christian theologians continue to be united with Augustine in understanding pride to be a kind of "perverse exaltation," which, when expressed as blatant and thorough-going rebellion against God, is, as Aquinas says, the "queen and mother of all vices" (ST II-II:132.4.r1; see also I-II:84.2).[21] Beyond this, the conceptions of humility and pride undergo substantial transformations depending upon how they are

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[20] For literature dealing with the complexity of Augustine's position on pagan virtue, see Robert Markus 1970, T. H. Irwin 1999, and Brett Gaul 2009.

[21] Calvin is the only partial-exception among the theologians discussed in this chapter. He says that although Augustine's claim that pride was the first sin was nearly right, the first sin was actually impiety. I find it strange, though, that Calvin does not see impiety as an aspect of pride, since it would have been in the traditional Christian view, just as true piety would have been seen as an aspect of humility.

articulated within the respective theological frameworks of the Christian humanist and hyper-Augustinian streams of thought and how they are bound up with the ways that these two traditions respond to the possibility of pagan virtue.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the core feature of Christian humanism is the conviction that, despite our tendencies to sin, humans by nature have an orientation towards God as evidenced by our draw to goodness, truth, and beauty, that human reason has the capacity to make true moral judgments, and that human initiative plays an active role in growth in virtue. In this section I will be exploring specifically how Aquinas's Christian humanist theological framework allows him to affirm the possibility of pagan virtue, and in turn, how his position on this issue shapes his understanding of pride and humility. I will be using Aquinas as the primary spokesperson for the Christian humanist tradition not only because he gives perhaps the most thorough discussion of pride and humility of those in this stream but also because he significantly influenced how later Christian humanist thinkers tended to think about the larger theological issues (e.g., the relationship between faith and reason and between God and morality) that will come to the fore in later sections of this dissertation.

Aquinas is able to grant true virtue to pagans by drawing a distinction between natural and theological virtue and between proximate and final ends.[22] Natural virtues, such as the cardinal virtues of justice, prudence, temperance, and courage, are those virtues directed toward the common good of an earthly society or to the perfection of the individual (ST I-II:61.1). All humans, whether pagan or Christian, have natural inclinations that direct us to our natural good and have the capacity to reason about those

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[22] I am deeply indebted to Herdt's 2008 helpful comparison of Augustine and Aquinas on the issue of pagan virtue (see Chapter Three, especially pp. 72-76).

character traits that are constitutive of natural flourishing and the moral laws that guide us to it. Furthermore, we can set about acquiring virtue through habituation, in a manner similar to Aristotle's account of how to develop good character. The theological, infused virtues of faith, hope, and charity are directed towards our ultimate end of the enjoyment of God (ST I-II:65.1; II-II:23.7). While faith in divine revelation is needed to affirm that these are in fact virtues, theological virtues are not at odds with reason or with natural virtues, Aquinas thinks, but fulfill the natural virtues, leading us to a deeper sort of flourishing than do the natural virtues alone.[23]

Thus, although Aquinas, like Augustine, regards charity, i.e., friendship with God, to be the crown of the moral life and the form of all virtue (ST II-II:23.8), unlike Augustine, he contends that it is possible to possess natural virtue apart from charity (ST II-II:23.7).[24] Since, however, Aquinas thinks that the acquired natural, moral virtues direct us only to a "proximate and particular good," the imperfect happiness of this life, they are imperfect and relative virtues, i.e., "virtues in a restricted sense." Theological, infused virtues, on the other hand, are "perfect" and "virtues simply" because they are constitutive of our ultimate end, the perfect happiness of beatitude (ST I-II:65.2; II-II:23.7). Therefore, while Augustine thinks that pagans are ultimately incapable of perfect virtue since they lack the charity which is constitutive of it, Aquinas contends that pagans can acquire true virtue so long as the proximate ends to which those virtues are directed

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[23] For example, the virtue of justice, when informed by the crowning virtue of charity or friendship with God, is enriched by the sort of love that enables one to see all persons, even enemies, as neighbors, as fellow persons loved by God. See Jean Porter 2005, pp. 378-400 for a discussion of how the theological virtues stand in relation to the natural ones in general and also for a an exposition of how justice informs charity in Aquinas and, as Porter argues on the basis of Aquinas's theory, charity informs and transforms justice as well.

[24] "If…we take virtue as being ordered to some particular end, then we may speak of virtue being where there is no charity, in so far as it is directed to some particular good" (ST II-II:23.7). See Brian Shanley (1999, 562) on this point.

are not opposed to charity.[25] For Aquinas, while pagan virtue remains imperfect if it is not actually ordered to God, the fact that it is capable of being so ordered nevertheless renders it true, genuine virtue. Also unlike Augustine, Aquinas does not think that pagan virtue is bound to be accompanied by concern for one's own glory. Pagan virtue does not invariably amount to cleverly disguised expressions of pride that bear the self-serving stamp of members of the earthly city, for the failure to refer a proximate end to God does not necessitate that pursuit of such an end constitutes a problematic self-orientation.

Furthermore, Aquinas's moral philosophy lacks Augustine's pervading anxiety about the prevalence of pride. Throughout Augustine's corpus we find perpetual concern for purity of intention and with it, a heightened awareness of the subtle ways in which we fail, especially with respect to our tendency to self-exaltation and our imperfect acknowledgment of our dependency on God. Aquinas, by contrast, is more disposed to affirm moral aspiration, even if it is imperfect, than to highlight impurity of intention. While Aquinas does think that "it is difficult to avoid pride, since it takes occasion even from good deeds," he maintains that "no very great gravity attaches to the movement of pride while creeping in secretly" (ST II-II:162.6.r1). Moreover, he thinks that once such pride is identified, it is "easily avoided, both by considering one's own infirmity…and by considering God's greatness" (ST II-II:162.6.r1). Aquinas thinks that it is impossible to achieve and sustain perfect awareness of our dependency on God in this life (ST I-II:109.4), and he does not make such awareness a prerequisite to virtue.

Not only does Aquinas's distinction between natural and theological virtues enable him to acknowledge pagan virtue, but it also leads to certain key shifts in

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[25] "Man's secondary and, as it were, particular good may be twofold: one is truly good, because, considered in itself, it can be directed to the principal good, which is the last end; while the other is good apparently and not truly, because it leads us away from the final good" (ST II-II:23.7).

Aquinas's very conceptions of humility and pride. While humility for Augustine is the

posture of those in the heavenly city, Aquinas classifies humility as a natural virtue and

therefore presumably regards it as a virtue that pagans can truly (if imperfectly) acquire.

But just as Aquinas widens the domain of humility, so, too, he narrows the scope of

pride. Despite the fact that many Christians tended to think that the pagan virtue of

magnanimity involves the vice of pride at its core, Aquinas rehabilitates magnanimity as

a virtue. What is more, although Aristotle's magnanimous man was seen by many

Christians as prideful in his preoccupation with his own moral worth and desire for self-

sufficiency, Aquinas revises Aristotle's account of magnanimity in such a way as to

connect it with true humility, regarding the two as twin virtues (*duplex virtus*).[26] In what

follows, I will present Aquinas's modified account of humility and pride in relation to his

stance on pagan virtue.[27] The significance of Aquinas's position on these topics will

become especially clear in the next section when contrasted with hyper-Augustinian

humility and pride.

The way in which humility is a natural virtue, a virtue available to pagans and

Christians alike, can be seen in Aquinas's initial description of humility. He understands

humility to be a restraining virtue, a virtue that curbs our propensity to pride. Aquinas

defines the vice of pride as the inordinate desire for one's own excellence in a manner

opposed to right reason (ST II-II:161.1; II-II:162.4). As such, humility entails knowledge

of one's deficiencies, since restraining pride requires a true understanding of what

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[26] See Mary Keys 2003 for an excellent analysis of how Aquinas departs from Aristotle's account of magnanimity by connecting it with humility. She argues, persuasively I think, that Aquinas's modifications of Aristotle are correctives.

[27] For the most thorough discussion and analysis of Aquinas's account of humility that I have found, see Fullam 2009. She emphasizes the Christological aspects of Thomistic humility, which I unfortunately cannot take up in this dissertation. For more on the centrality of Christology in Christian accounts of humility, see also Studer 1993 (see section III.2), Wengst 1987, Daley 1995, Doss 1987, Evans 1992, and Roberts 2009.

surpasses one's capacities (ST II-II:161.2). While humility involves self-knowledge, however, it is a virtue that falls under temperance and thus fundamentally pertains to the appetite (ST II-II:161.2).[28] Just as the person who possesses temperance with respect to food and drink, desires and enjoys the proper amount, so the humble person willingly accepts the limitations and dependency that is part of the human condition and does not desire to ascribe to herself excellences that she does not possess. Likewise the humble person is aware of her moral failings and does not have a false sense of her moral worth.[29]

It is worth noting that although the humble person is marked by her awareness of her weaknesses, limitations, and moral failings, Aquinas is careful to communicate that humility does not involve thinking less of oneself than is truthful, nor does it require having a diminished sense of one's capacities. This is made clear, in part, by the fact that Aquinas argues on multiple occasions that magnanimity and humility are not opposed, and in fact are mutually reinforcing virtues (ST II-II:129.3.r4; II-II:162.1; II-II:162.1. r3; II-II:162. 2.r2; II-II:162.4.r3). On Aquinas's account, therefore, humility must be fully compatible with possessing greatness of soul, striving to do that which is deserving of honor, and regarding great honors as something of which one is worthy, if one is in fact worthy of them (ST II-II:129.1; II-II:129.1.r3; see also II-II:129.2.r3). Humility is opposed to having an untruthfully inflated sense of one's excellence (pride), but it is in no

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[28] Here is Aquinas's most complete statement of the nature of humility: "humility has essentially to do with the appetite, in so far as a man restrains the impetuosity of his soul, from tending inordinately to great things: yet its rule is in the cognitive faculty, in that we should not deem ourselves to be above what we are. Also, the principle and origin of both these things is the reverence we bear to God. Now the inward disposition of humility leads to certain outward signs in words, deeds, and gestures, which manifest that which is hidden within" (ST II-II:161.6). I will address the aspect of humility pertaining to reverence toward God later, in the body of the text.

[29] It seems that for Aquinas, humility is less self-referential than pride. Although humility includes awareness of weakness and moral failure, Aquinas defines it negatively, as curbing the tendency to pride. Pride, however, is inherently self-oriented.

way contrary to recognizing one's genuine worth and capacity for greatness (magnanimity). Sometimes we refer to this sort of self-affirmation of one's excellence as pride, but Aquinas is careful to point out that if by pride one means "super-abundance," then pride is good and is not to be confused with what Aquinas has in mind when he discusses the vice of pride (ST II-II:162.1.r1). Proper self-affirmation, far from being contrary to humility, is actually virtuous, and, moreover, Aquinas thinks that knowing and approving of one's virtue and good works is important for the kind of self-knowledge needed for sound practical judgment (see ST II-II:132.1 and II-II:132.1.r3).

For Aquinas, then, true humility does not undermine self-esteem.[30] In fact, he distinguishes humility from magnanimity's vicious contrary, pusillanimity. Pusillanimity denotes smallness of soul (ST II-II:133.2) and involves the refusal to cultivate or utilize one's talents (ST II-II:133.1). While the magnanimous person has confidence in her abilities (ST II-II:129.6), firmness of mind with respect to what is truly honorable (ST II-II:129.5), and security of self (ST II-II:129.7), the pusillanimous person shrinks from great works out of fear (ST II-II:133.2). Interestingly, Aquinas says that pusillanimity may even stem from pride, as when a person staunchly clings to his own opinion that he is incompetent for that of which he is truly competent (ST II-II:133.1. r3). Aquinas's conception of humility is therefore as free from the self-doubt, petty anxiety, shallowness, and false depreciation of oneself characteristic of pusillanimity as it is from the self-aggrandizement characteristic of pride.[31]

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[30] Aquinas, for example, says that "humility observes the rule of right reason whereby a man has true self-esteem. Now pride does not observe this rule of right reason, for he esteems himself greater than he is: and this is the outcome of an inordinate desire for his own excellence" (ST II-II:162. 3.r2).

[31] See ST II-II:162.1. r3, where Aquinas distinguishes between pride, magnanimity, pusillanimity, and humility.

Thus far I have emphasized the natural, non-theological aspects of Aquinas's discussion of humility in accord with his placement of humility as a species of temperance, a natural virtue. I want to discuss the prospects for humility as a natural virtue later in this section as well as in Chapter Six. Now, however, I wish to stress that although Aquinas regards humility as a natural, rather than theological virtue, he does discuss humility (and pride) in relation to God. Like Augustine, Aquinas says that he understands humility to be "…*chiefly* the subjection of man to God" (ST II-II:161.1.r5, emphasis mine). This humility before God involves reverence (ST II-II: 161.2.r3), and it also involves receptivity to God and to his grace (ST II-II:161.5.r2). Correspondingly, he retains Augustine's sense of pride: "pride properly regards lack of this subjection, in so far as man raises himself above that which is appointed to him according to the Divine rule or measure" (II-II:162.5). Pride in its most extreme and harmful form involves a willful rebellion against God, and it is this sort of pride that is the "queen and mother of all vices" (ST II-II: 132.4.r1; see also I-II:84.2) because it is most opposed to charity and leads to further vice.

Magnanimity, also a natural virtue, is likewise understood by Aquinas with reference to God. While in Aristotle, the magnanimous person strives for self-sufficiency, which is imitative of the Unmoved Mover, in Aquinas the magnanimous person "deem[s] himself worthy of great things in consideration of the gifts he holds from God" (ST II-II:129.3.r4). In this way Aquinas builds accepting our dependency on God, which is characteristic of humility, into his account of magnanimity. Aquinas thinks that every

person needs God's grace for perfection in virtue,[32] and he says that it belongs to

magnanimity to be confident in God's assistance (ST II-II:129.6.r1).[33] (This then is one

of the ways that Aquinas weds magnanimity and humility: in humility we recognize our

weaknesses and our need for the assistance of God (and of others), and our confidence in

the goodness of God and in his help (as well as in the help of others) enables us to aspire

to magnanimity.)

Humility (and magnanimity and their opposite vices) involves not only our

relation to God, however, but also our relation to others. Nevertheless, Aquinas's account

of that manner by which humility shapes our stance towards others is informed by his

primary sense of this virtue involving a proper relation to God. For example, Aquinas

observes that the reverence we have for God (an aspect of humility, on Aquinas's

account) entails our reverence for what is of God in all others (ST II-II: 161.3.r1).[34] Aside

from the fact, for Aquinas, that each person deserves reverence as the bearer of God's

image (the *Imago Dei*), Aquinas also thinks that we are to have an attitude of humility

towards all others with respect to the specific gifts they have from God.[35] And when these

gifts are not readily apparent, we can still cultivate a just attitude of humility towards

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[32] It should be emphasized that the need for grace is not only because, as Aquinas thinks, one's will is weakened by original sin and unable of attaining moral perfection by one's own efforts but also because eudaimonia for Aquinas consists in sharing in the divine life.

[33] Aquinas also maintains that appropriate confidence in others and in oneself is a part of magnanimity: "For every man needs, first, the Divine assistance, secondly, even human assistance, since man is naturally a social animal, for he is insufficient by himself to provide for his own life. Accordingly, in so far as he needs others, it belongs to a magnanimous man to have confidence in others… And in so far as his own ability goes, it belongs to a magnanimous man to be confident in himself" (ST II-II:129.6.r1).

[34] "We must not only revere God in Himself, but also that which is His in each one, although not with the same measure of reverence as we revere God. Wherefore we should subject ourselves with humility to all our neighbors for God's sake" (ST II-II:161.3.r1).

[35] In Chapter Six I will discuss reverence as an aspect of proper humility, and I will consider whether Hume has adequate resources for articulating a secular account of reverence for all persons.

everyone by considering that they may in truth have gifts from God that are not

immediately visible to us.[36] As Aquinas says,

> If we set what our neighbor has of God's above that which we have of our own,
> we cannot incur falsehood [by having humility before all others]. Wherefore a
> gloss on Philip. Ii. 3, *Esteem others better than themselves, says: We must not
> esteem by pretending to esteem; but we should in truth think it possible for
> another person to have something that is hidden to us and whereby he is better
> than we are, although our own good whereby we are apparently better than he, be
> not hidden*. (ST II-II:161.3.r2)[37]

It may seem that Aquinas, by grounding humility before all others in what is

"hidden" is losing traction with what is or may be the truth of the matter in order to pay

his due to Scripture and to the monastic tradition, both of which teach the importance of

having humility before all. Whether it is indeed right to assume a stance of humility

before everyone will be a point of contention between Aquinas and Hume that I will

discuss in Chapter Six. Here I wish to suggest that, along with the sense of reverence

towards others that Aquinas advocates in his discussion of humility, he additionally

regards humility to include a readiness to see and to be open to the gifts of others, a

willingness to grow from others, and an expectation that others can enrich us. Such

attitudes are inseparable, as Aquinas's statements suggest, from being reverent to God

and seeking God's presence in the goodness of others. These are attitudes that,

correspondingly, stand in contrast to the attitudes that Aquinas observes to be

characteristic of pride, which makes us "presume inordinately on [our] superiority over

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[36] This does not mean that we should always be deferential to all others, however. Aquinas thinks
that "humility resides chiefly inwardly in the soul," and a person can bear this reverence to another without
outwardly subjecting oneself to another when doing so would be detrimental to that other's welfare;
outward acts of humility require moderation (ST II-II:161.3.r3). A teacher, for example, may bear a kind of
humility or reverence before her student, even a recalcitrant one, believing that the student has dignity and,
indeed, gifts that the teacher does not see. Yet this humility does not require that the teacher outwardly
subject herself to her student.

[37] See also where Aquinas says, "Yet humility makes us honor others and esteem them better than
ourselves, in so far as we see some of God's gifts in them" (ST II-II:129.3.r4).

others" (ST II-II:162.3.r4) and can lead us to despise others or to overlook others in a self-preoccupied desire to be conspicuous (ST II-II:162.3.r4). (In Chapter Six I will thus also explore the relationship between this de-centering posture of humility and cultivating a wider, more extensive sympathy.)

In what sense, then, can humility be said to be a natural virtue if it is constituted in part by right relation to (the Christian) God for Aquinas? Correspondingly, in what sense is the virtue of humility available to pagans? These are complicated questions that I am not theologically equipped to answer. For the purpose of this dissertation, however, what I wish to emphasize is that Aquinas at least opens up the possibility for the virtue of humility to be articulated with reference to individual and communal flourishing and to be a true, if imperfect, virtue when it is referred to the common good and capable of being referred to our final end. Certainly there are many features of Aquinas's conception of humility that are separable from their explicit relation to God. The need for humility (i.e., restraint from our tendency to have an untruthfully high view of ourselves) is surely apparent in human relationships. As Aquinas points out, pride can make us fail in loving others (ST II-II:162.5.r2), can make us ungrateful and unwilling to acknowledge our indebtedness (ST II-II:162.5.r2), and can make us focus on the faults of others so as to elevate ourselves (ST II-II:162.3.r2), to name but a few possible effects of pride that are immediately seen to be destructive to the common good.

Furthermore, while Aquinas advocates humility before others on account of the visible or hidden gifts they have from God, it is possible to reverence others for their humanity and for their abilities and, also, to maintain a sense of reverence on the basis of acknowledging that there is always more to people, always hidden strengths and struggles

to appreciate, that are not readily apparent to the mere acquaintance or sometimes even to the lifelong friend. To be sure, humility is needed even to acknowledge the limitations of our judgments of others and also to acknowledge the ways in which our own strengths depend to a large extent on factors beyond our control such as our biological predispositions, our cultural and moral environment, and the care that others have shown us. (I will develop these points in Chapter Six, where I discuss ways in which Hume could go further in developing an account of a virtue pertaining to dealing with human weakness and dependency along these lines.)

The possibility and value of secular humility will be a topic of discussion in Chapter Six when I compare Aquinas and Hume on pride and humility and discuss their conceptions with reference to their respective transcendent or immanent perspectives. What will become apparent is that because Aquinas allows for pagan virtue, this sort of discussion is not only possible but, I think, highly fruitful. In the remainder of this chapter, however, I want to discuss what happens to conceptions of Christian humility in the trajectory that intensifies Augustine's concerns with respect to the splendid vices— i.e., in the hyper-Augustinian stream of Christian thought. As I will later show, it was the hyper-Augustinian strand to which Hume was responding, and his reaction to it arguably played quite a large role in his project of secularizing moral philosophy.

III. Pride and Humility in the Hyper-Augustinian Tradition

As we saw, core theological commitments characteristic of the Christian humanist tradition (represented here by Aquinas) make possible a greater generosity to pagan virtue, an affirmation of magnanimity as a virtue, and a conception of humility that is aligned with a healthy self-esteem. In this section I will explore how central theological

positions in the hyper-Augustinian tradition lead to an amplification of Augustine's stance with respect to pagan virtue and further shape their conceptions of pride and humility in directions that go beyond what Augustine would have endorsed. I aim here to outline some of those theological changes and to show how they led to a conception of humility that, from the perspective of Hume, looks quite like self-deprecation and, particularly for the Protestant Reformers, takes on undertones of passivity and servility as well.

As previously stated, it is hyper-Augustinian forms of Christianity and its versions of humility with which Hume was most familiar. Hume's contact with hyper-Augustinian theology comes from two sub-traditions: 1) the Protestant strand of Luther and Calvin, whose thought left a deep imprint upon the religious culture in Scotland during Hume's lifetime and whose theology undergirds the spiritual instruction given in *The Whole Duty of Man*, which Hume read as a boy, and 2) the Jansenist strand, represented here by Pierre Nicole and Pascal,[38] the former of whom inadvertently paves the way for Hume's secularization of ethics (and, arguably, for Hume's rehabilitation of pride as well) and the latter of whom Hume critiques precisely for his humility.[39] In this section I will discuss the characteristic theological positions of the Protestant Reformers and the Jansenists that have a bearing on how humility comes to be understood. Doing so will facilitate a deeper

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[38] Pierre Nicole (1625-1695) was a French Jansenist who studied and taught at Port-Royal abbey. He collaborated with Pascal on the *Provincial Letters* (1656-57) and with Antoine Arnauld on the *Port-Royal Logic* (1662). In 1675, he began to publish editions of *Moral Essays*, which were a collection of writings dealing with our relations to God and to one another. In his work *Of Charity and Self-Love* he provides a "moral anatomy" of worldly virtue, which he thinks can be shown to arise out of self-love. He seeks to show that, though self-love and charity are radically different in their underlying motivations, the former can perfectly mimic the latter in observable human behavior. This is because since charity is pleasing to others, enlightened self-love seeks to imitate it so as to garner others' approval. To present his account of pride and humility, I will be drawing from both works.

[39] See "A Dialogue," an appendix to the EPM. Mossner argues that it is likely that Hume first read Nicole in the library of the Jesuit college of La Flèche when he was writing *The Treatise of Human Nature* (1980, 102). Herdt argues that Hume would have read Pascal at that time as well (1997, 182).

appreciation of Hume's negative evaluation of humility and the theological frameworks which make this conception of humility possible.

Before beginning it is worth noting that I will not be giving the same detailed account of humility in each of the figures of this section as that I did with Augustine and Aquinas. I went to some length explaining Augustine because he is foundational for understanding the Christian developments thereafter. I described Aquinas's account of humility with greater detail, first, because he is more systematic and thorough on the topic than are the hyper-Augustinian figures in this section. Second, and more importantly, I did so because in the sixth chapter I will be setting Aquinas's and Hume's accounts of pride in humility in the sort of conversation that would only be possible on the basis of a more thorough explanation of Aquinas's view.

For the purposes of this dissertation, however, I need not present a meticulous account of each hyper-Augustinian thinker's conception of humility. It suffices to show broadly how hyper-Augustinians tend to conceive of humility in order to establish in Chapter Three that Hume seems to conceive of Christian humility in a manner akin to the hyper-Augustinian conception and that Hume's adamant objections to it are applicable to this theological stream. It is also important to mention that while Hume directly critiques Pascal's humility in the appendix to the *Second Enquiry* entitled "A Dialogue" and nowhere specifically mentions Protestant theologians when he condemns humility as a monkish virtue,[40] it is arguably Calvinist humility that has most greatly formed Hume's sense of Christian humility. Jennifer Herdt, I think rightly, remarks that since Pascal's emphasis on renouncing worldly happiness is akin to the Evangelical Presbyterianism in

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[40] Besides Pascal, he does mention certain Christian monastic figures (specifically, Dominic, Francis, Anthony, and Benedict) in connection with the monkish virtue of humility (NH X, 164).

which Hume was raised, Hume can be understood as leveling objections against Scottish

Calvinism in and through his critique of Pascal, who would have been a safer target for

Hume's critiques given the religious climate at home (1997, 182). Accordingly, in what

follows, it is the Protestant trajectory, especially as found in Calvin and *The Whole Duty

of Man*, that I take to be the most pertinent to Hume's rejection of humility, the topic that

will be discussed in Chapter Three.

a. Humility as Self-Depreciation

As mentioned in the Introduction, the key feature of the hyper-Augustinian

stream, and which resides at the heart of the theology of both the Protestant Reformers

and the Jansenists, is a strongly pessimistic view of human nature.[41] In contrast to the

Christian humanists who acknowledge sin but nevertheless see humans as having a

natural orientation towards goodness as well, hyper-Augustinians think that the Fall was

so catastrophic as to render human nature wholly corrupt. In this way hyper-Augustinians

share Augustine's conviction regarding the deep pervasiveness of sin in human life.

Since, however, hyper-Augustinians tended to be anti-eudaimonistic in their explicitly

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[41] To give but a few examples: Nicole claims that a "tyrannical disposition, being firmly implanted deep in the hearts of all men, makes them violent, unjust, cruel, ambitious, obsequious, envious, insolent, and quarrelsome" (CS I, 371). Pascal writes that the "nature of self-love and of this human self is to love only self and consider only self" (P 978). Luther says that

> The ungodly [i.e., the false Christian or the non-Christian], as we have said, is like Satan his prince in being wholly intent on himself and his own affairs; he does not seek after God or care about the things that are God's, but he seeks his own wealth, his own glories, works, wisdom, power, and in short his own kingdom, and these he wishes to enjoy in peace. But if anyone resists him or attempts to encroach upon any of these things, then by the same aversion from God that leads him to seek them, he is moved to indignation and rage against his adversary, and is as incapable of not being angry as of not desiring and seeking…(LW 33, 177)

Calvin maintains that "…man has no remaining good in himself, and is beset on every side by the most miserable destitution" (ICR II.2.1, 157) Similar statements from these thinkers can be found at various points in this section.

avowed moral psychology, Augustine's attention to human sinfulness becomes exacerbated.[42]

For the Protestant Reformers anti-eudaimonism led to a more extreme view of human depravity because, unlike in Augustine, the pursuit of happiness (including the pursuit of God as our final end) came to be seen as competing with virtue rather than constitutive of it, as expressing selfish self-love rather than pure love of the good. While Augustine thought that by nature we longed for the happiness or beatitude of resting in God, the Reformers were inclined to articulate proper love of God as fundamentally selfless in nature.[43] In other words, for Luther and Calvin, seeking happiness in God could call into question whether God was the real object of love or whether one was instead using God to gratify one's self-interest.[44] Viewed from this interpretive lens, humans appear more profoundly and intractably wretched than Augustine thought, for even the desire for God and goodness, if it is also inseparable from the desire for one's fulfillment, tended to be seen as sinful and as further evidence of our utter depravity and prideful self-orientation.

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[42] I am indebted to Herdt 2008 for this observation, which she first mentions on p. 2 but reiterates in her discussions of hyper-Augustinian thinkers. She traces the anti-eudaimonism in the hyper-Augustinian stream back to Scotus. She points out that while Augustine thinks that God fulfills us through transforming our desires and Aquinas says that charity involves loving God for God's own sake, Scotus requires a more demanding sort of disinterested love insofar as he saw concern for self-fulfillment to tarnish the person's love of God (2008, 105). The move away from classical Christian eudaimonism is eventually taken up in different ways by Protestant and Jansenist theology and bears an important stamp on both traditions' conceptions of virtue, vice, and moral psychology.

[43] Peura is especially astute on this theme in Luther. He observes that for Luther human love of God is always "directed toward the good that God is able to give us and not toward the *triune God himself*" (1998, 77; quoted in Herdt 2008, 188).

[44] The Swedish Lutheran theologian Andres Nygren's critique of Augustine for his so-called egoism in his classic *Eros and Agape* is an example of how, as I see it, a failure to appreciate eudaimonism can lead one to interpret the pursuit of fulfillment in and through loving God as a form of selfishness that stands opposed to Christian agape.

As with the Protestant Reformers, the Jansenists' rejection of eudiamonism also led to an intensified view of human depravity.[45] Although they, in contrast to the Reformers, more deeply questioned whether pure love of God was possible and came to various subtle positions on the limits of human disinterestedness, their anti-eudaimonism disposes them to be more suspicious of the presence of self-interest in moral motivation than a eudaimonist would be. For example, Pascal's claim that the "nature of self-love and of this human self is to love only self and consider only self" (P 978) is a view quite different from that of Aquinas, and even Augustine would, given his eudaimonism, have better resources for articulating an account of good self-love and appropriate self-interest. Without a framework that readily allows for a way to identify proper and improper forms of self-interest, the Jansenists had a greater *tendency* to interpret arguably good forms of self-interest as problematic and indicative of human sinfulness, even if they did not always do so.

This darker view of human nature espoused by hyper-Augustinians consequently gives new shape to humility and pride. As we saw, for Augustine, humility has more to do with accepting our status as creatures, as rightly turning to God in loving receptivity,

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[45] Some qualification is in order, however, since all the hyper-Augustinian theologians under discussion here would affirm that ultimately union with God through Christ is what brings true well-being. As Pascal says, "in him [i.e., Christ] is all our virtue and all our happiness" (P 416). The typical departure from traditional eudaimonism that we see in these thinkers is their tendency to oppose self-love and virtue or the love of God in a way that is quite different from anything we see in Augustine or Aquinas, for example. For instance, Pascal says, "We must love God alone and hate ourselves alone" (P 373). Nicole says that "[charity] does not love itself" (CS VI, 377) and that "every man's heart [is] turned entirely toward himself" (CS V, 375). While Augustine uses the language of self-love to describe the earthly city, it is clear from his work as a whole that he is there using 'self-love' to indicate selfish self-love. In other places he affirms that this is not true self-love, however. See O'Donovan 2006 for an extended analysis of Augustine's full account of self-love. Kent has a concise and valuable discussion of self-love in Augustine (2001, 217-18). She helpfully observes that Augustine objects not to self-love per se but to pride, "a perverse and highly specific kind of self-love that leads one to arrogate to oneself a place that properly belongs to God alone" (218).

than it does with inculcating a negative view of the self.[46] With the hyper-Augustinian

conviction regarding the depth of human wickedness, however, humility comes to be

primarily understood as possessing self-knowledge of the full extent of one's moral

bankruptcy and being grieved by and repentant of one's spiritual waywardness.[47] We see

this in the thought of John Calvin, for example, who connects humility with true self-

knowledge of our wickedness (ICR II.1.1, summary, 146), affirming that "he who is most

deeply abased and alarmed, by the consciousness of his disgrace, nakedness, want, and

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[46] John Burnaby makes this point in his study of Augustine on the love of God. He says "[Augustinian humility] has nothing to do with self-deprecation. It is the humility of the believer as such, the inward aspect of faith in God as the source of all good, the necessary implication of acceptance of the doctrine of grace" (1947, 73). While Augustine will refer to pride as the self-love of the earthly city, he takes pains to point out that pride is false self-love and that true self-love is only attained in humility. In humility the self not only finds fulfillment, but the self is raised up through being subject to God, thereby accepting our proper place in the order of goods. Augustine's following statement on humility shows no hint of self-depreciation:

> Thus, in a surprising way, there is something in humility to exalt the mind, and something in exaltation to abase it. It certainly appears somewhat paradoxical that exaltation abases and humility exalts. But devout humility makes the mind subject to what is superior. Nothing is superior to God; and that is why humility exalts the mind by making it subject to God. Exaltation, in contrast, derives from a fault in character, and spurns subjection for that very reason. Hence it falls away from him who has no superior, and falls lower in consequence. Thus the scriptural saying is fulfilled, 'You have thrown them down when they were being lifted up' (Ps. 73, 118). It does not say, 'When they had been lifted up', that is, that they were first lifted up and then thrown down; they were thrown down in the very act of being exalted. The exaltation itself is in fact already an overthrow. (CG XIV.13, 572-73)

See also where Augustine says,

> We can see then that the Devil would not have entrapped man by the obvious and open sin of doing what God had forbidden, had not man already started to please himself. That is why he was delighted also with the statement, 'You will be like gods' (Gen. 3, 5). In fact they would have been better able to be like gods if they had in obedience adhered to the supreme and real ground of their being, if they had not in pride made themselves their own ground. For created gods are gods not in their own true nature but by participation in the true God. By aiming at more, a man is diminished, when he elects to be self-sufficient and defects from the one who is really sufficient for him. (CG XIV.13, 573)

[47] In emphasizing the centrality of sin-consciousness to hyper-Augustinian humility, there is a sense in which the Christian tradition, humanist strand included, affirms the importance of having a profound awareness of our imperfection before God. John Cottingham helpfully brings out that in Biblical descriptions of encounters with God by means of the natural world (he discusses Isaiah 6:1-4, Psalms 96[95]:11-13, Psalms 29[28]:5-9, and Exodus 3:5 (see pp. 114-15 and 120)) the person is "overwhelmed by the power and beauty of nature in a way that is somehow intertwined with awareness of one's own weakness and imperfection, and a sense of confrontation with inexorable demands of justice and righteousness" (2015, 115-16). Nevertheless, this deeply felt sense of one's imperfection in an experience of the sacred need not include a conviction that one literally has no good whatsoever.

misery, has made the greatest progress in the knowledge of himself" (ICR II.2.10, 163).[48]

While hyper-Augustinians nevertheless will, in their various ways, affirm that we are capable of greatness through God's grace,[49] there is a new emphasis placed on humility as involving a thorough-going habit of self-reflection by which we identify our weaknesses and sins rather than its primary reference denoting an upward turn of the soul to God as it was in Augustine. In what follows, I show how humility takes on this self-abnegating character in hyper-Augustinian descriptions of what this virtue entails.

We see a central place given to humility, understood as cultivating an awareness of our sinfulness, in the Jansenists. Pascal sought to show that "we are nothing but lies, duplicity, contradiction, and we hide and disguise ourselves from ourselves" (P 655). We are not only fallen, but because we carry a "deadly hatred for the truth which rebukes [us] and convinces [us] of [our] faults," we deceive ourselves such that we willfully fail to see our own fallenness (P 978). In *Pensées* Pascal aims to help his readers to true self-knowledge, which involves knowledge of original sin: it is an "astounding thing that the mystery furthest from our ken, that of the transmission of sin, should be something without which we can have no knowledge of ourselves" (P 131). This knowledge is not attained through "the proud activity of our reason but through simple submission" (P

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[48] Luther likewise stresses sin-consciousness as being central to self-knowledge. He says, for example, that God's commandments "are intended to teach man to know himself, that through them he may recognize his inability to do good and may despair of his own ability," leading him to become "truly humbled and reduced to nothing in his own eyes" (LW 31, 348). Becoming aware that "that all things in you are altogether blameworthy, sinful, and damnable" (LW 31, 346-47) is crucial for relinquishing the project of attaining salvation through works and for receiving the promises of God through faith (see LW 31, 349).

[49] The Jansenists tended to be more balanced in their attention to greatness as well as depravity. Pascal, for example, stresses that these dual potentialities are central to the human condition. He writes, "Christianity is strange. It bids man to recognize that he is vile, and even abominable, and bids him want to be like God. Without such a counterweight his exaltation would make him horribly vain or his abasement horribly abject" (P 351). (Pascal's stress on our greatness, however, has less to do with moral greatness and more to do with our capacity for self-reflection.) Similarly in Nicole's treatise entitled "Of the Weakness of Man" in the *Moral Essays* he counsels that we must truthfully consider our greatness as well as our weakness (ME I.X, 5).

131). Hence, we see that for Pascal it is an expression of pride to resist the notion of original sin (which he understands to be thorough corruption), and correspondingly humility involves accepting it as our true condition.

Nicole signals humility's importance in that the topic of the first treatise of the first volume of his *Moral Essays* is "Of the Weakness of Man." He opens by saying, "Pride is a swelling of the heart, by which man dilates and magnifies himself in his own imaginations, and the Idea, or conceit of our selves it imprints in us, is an Idea of strength, of greatness, and of excellence" (ME I, 1). And shortly thereafter he writes,

> If therefore our Pride proceed from the Idea we have of our own strength and our own excellence, the best means we have of establishing the contrary virtue of humility, will be to convince us of our own weakness. The tumour must be lanc'd to give vent to the wind that swells it up, We must undeceive and free our selves from those false lights by which we appear in our own Eyes Great; by placing before them our own littleness and infirmaries. (ME VII, 3)

That humility involves having a negative view of oneself for Nicole is especially made clear when he discusses the true humility that flows from charity versus the false semblance of humility that is motivated by pride. The charitable love justice, and since being "brought low and humbled" is, according to the eternal law, our just desert for our many sins, "charity not only accepts this law but loves it and, because of this love, joyfully embraces every humiliation and every abasement" (CS V, 375). The truly humble, moreover, condemn themselves for their faults, confess them openly, and gladly receive bitter reprimands since they serve to weaken self-love (CS VII, 377-78).

In the Jansenists there is not, I soon suggest, the same insistence upon our wretchedness as is found in the Protestant Reformers. Nevertheless, in the Jansenists there is a subtle shift away from Augustine insofar as humility comes to refer more to the practice of self-reflective awareness of our wretchedness even if it also involves

receptivity to God and appreciating our need for divine assistance. Augustine stressed our

dependency on God in all things, but Jansenist humility seems to emphasize *our*

selfishness and inability to do good first and foremost. In other words, for the Jansenists

the (wicked) self seems to become humility's primary object of focus.

While Jansenists' accounts of humility correspond to their convictions regarding

human fallenness, however, the stress on humility involving knowledge of the depth of

one's sinfulness takes on an even stronger character in the Protestant tradition. On the

Jansenists' account of Christian formation, a humble awareness of our sinfulness

develops over time through the process of spiritual maturation. For Luther and Calvin,

however, a heightened consciousness of our depravity and dependency on God—the

stance of humility—becomes a prerequisite for genuine spiritual growth at all. This

difference stems from to the fact the Jansenists do not separate justification (i.e., being

made right with God) from sanctification (i.e., spiritual maturation) in the way that the

Protestant Reformers do but see them, rather, as a unified process (see Herdt 2008, 225,

236). The Jansenists thought, in concert with the Christian tradition before them, that the

grace-enabled process of becoming more like Christ makes possible a culminating union

with God, a union based on the real oneness of heart that God and the transformed person

share. On this model, one is increasingly made right with God (justified) as one actually

becomes more like Christ (sanctified). Luther and Calvin, by contrast, regard justification

as foundational to sanctification, i.e., true (grace-assisted) moral and spiritual growth is

only possible if the person is justified before God.[50] Both thought that being made right

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[50] Herdt points out that similar to the Jansenists, Luther affirms that we cannot be justified apart from the indwelling of Christ in the believer. But for Luther union with Christ is understood not as founded upon likeness achieved through time by the gradual transformation of the person but as God accepting us as the sinners that we are and choosing to dwell in us. This union with Christ justifies us because in this marriage

with God—and thereby attaining salvation—involves self-awareness of one's depravity and subsequent repentance (i.e., the features of humility). Humility, as the prerequisite to salvation and the genuine Christian life, must therefore be complete at a founding moment in time (see Herdt 2008, 183). Thus in the early Protestant tradition (especially in Calvin as we will see) there is perhaps an even greater urgency placed on the necessity of our coming to full self-knowledge of our iniquity, for without it we are barred from salvation as well as from making any real spiritual progress.

Luther, for example, thinks that we, being utterly sinful and incapable of goodness, cannot hope to please God by trying to be good by our own power (LW 31, 348). Aspiring to virtue in this way only serves to embed ourselves more deeply in the sin of pride,[51] which for Luther is manifested in the very thought that we can grow in virtue by our own efforts (see LW 26, 286-87; LW 11, 469). Attempting to be good merely amounts to 'works righteousness,' which has no genuine moral merit. Since, according to Luther, human acts are stained by self-love and pride, we justly incur God's wrath. However, honest confession of our sinfulness and moral incapacity before God allows for Christ to dwell within and to be unified to the believer such that God sees Christ's righteousness and does not impute to us our sins (LW 26, 284; 26, 288; LW 31, 351). Humility is therefore essential to our being justified by Christ, which, in Luther's theology is the necessary condition not only for salvation but also for genuine moral and

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between believer and Christ, God sees not our sins but Christ's righteousness (LW 26, 284; 26, 288; 31, 351). This union also makes possible life in the Spirit, where God works in us to bear good fruit. Acting on our own accord, apart from Christ, results, at best, in 'works righteousness,' which are manifestations of sin. Thus, the indwelling of Christ at once justifies us and makes possible sanctification, since for Luther Christ's indwelling (and only Christ's indwelling) brings forth true virtue (2008, 178). See Paul Althaus for a detailed exposition of how, for Luther, "justification by faith determines Christian ethics because, for the Christian, justification is both the presupposition and the source of the ethical life" (1972, 3).

[51] Luther says, for example, "Nature, moreover, inwardly and necessarily glories and takes pride in every work which is apparently and outwardly good" (LW 31, 11).

spiritual growth (LW 31, 348-49; LW 44, 72; Althaus, 3; Herdt 2008, 176), as I

mentioned above. A dim sense of our failings is not sufficient for Christ's indwelling,

however. What is needed is awareness that we are thoroughly sinful and entirely unable

to do good by our own initiative (LW 26, 264). For Luther, pride lurks where such

awareness is lacking. The proper humble stance is, it seems, to see oneself from one

aspect of the supposed divine perspective—that is, as deserving eternal condemnation—

in order to appropriately appreciate the need for Christ's sacrifice and depth of God's

mercy.[52]

Calvin, who was the greatest influence on the religious culture of Scotland in

Hume's lifetime, was also uncompromising about the importance of humbly coming to

know the depth of our iniquity.[53] The following passage summarizes Calvin's position:

> But what means is there of humbling us if we do not make way for the mercy of
> God by our utter indigence and destitution? For I call it not humility, so long as
> we think there is any good remaining in us. Those who have joined together the
> two things, to think humbly of ourselves before God and yet hold our own
> righteousness in some estimation, have hitherto taught a pernicious hypocrisy. For
> if we confess to God contrary to what we feel, we wickedly lie to him; but we
> cannot feel as we ought without seeing that everything like a ground of boasting is
> completely crushed. Therefore, when you hear from the prophet, "thou wilt save

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[52] This view of humility is detectable even in Luther's earlier thought. See, for example, the
following points he makes in the Heidelberg Disputation:

> 16. The person who believes that he can obtain grace by doing what is in him adds sin to sin so that
> he becomes doubly guilty.
> 17. Nor does speaking in this manner give cause for despair, but for arousing the desire to humble
> oneself and seek the grace of Christ.
> 18. It is certain that man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the
> grace of Christ. (LW 31, 40)

See also where Luther says, "As it is written, 'Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness
at all times' (Ps. 106:3). Judgment is nothing else than a man's knowing and judging and condemning
himself, and *this is true humility and self-abasement*. Righteousness is nothing else than a man's knowing
himself and praying to God for the mercy and help through which God raises him up again." (LW 51, 98,
emphasis mine).

[53] See Calvin's summary description of Section 1 of Chapter One of Book II of *Institutes of the
Christian Religion*, which reads as follows: "The knowledge of ourselves is most necessary. To use it
properly we must be divested of pride, and clothed with true humility, which will dispose us to consider our
fall, and embrace the mercy of God in Christ" (II.1, 146). It is not insignificant that a discussion of humility
is directly at the beginning of Book II, which is entitled "Through the Fall and Revolt of Adam, the Whole
Human Race Made Accursed and Degenerate. Of Original Sin."

the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks" (Ps 18:27), *consider, first, that there is no access to salvation unless all pride is laid aside and true humility embraced*; secondly, that that humility is not a kind of moderation by which you yield to God some article of your right (thus men are called humble in regard to each other when they neither conduct themselves haughtily nor insult over other, though they may still entertain some consciousness of their own excellence), but that *it is the unfeigned submission of a mind overwhelmed by a serious conviction of its want and misery*. (ICR III.12.6, 496, emphases mine)

We see here that Calvin, like Luther, regards humility to be necessary for salvation and that it must be complete from the inception of the Christian life. "*All* pride [must be] laid aside," the "mind [must be] *overwhelmed* by a serious conviction of its want," otherwise "there is no access to salvation." Not only, then, is humility understood as full recognition of our dire sinfulness, but the need for such awareness is absolutely pressing, since one's eternal destiny hinges upon it.

This emphasis on the necessity of having a complete appreciation for our thorough corruption is characteristic of early Protestantism, and it is reflected in *The Whole Duty of Man*, that spiritual instruction manual Hume read when he was young. It says, for example, that in order to be obedient to God's will

humility is exceedingly necessary; for … [i]f we are not *thoroughly* persuaded that God is infinitely above us, that *we are vileness and nothing* in comparison of him, we shall never pay our due obedience. Therefore, if ever you mean to obey entirely (*as you must, if ever you mean to be saved*) get your hearts possessed with the sense of that great unspeakable distance that is between God and you. Consider him as he is, a God of infinite majesty and glory, and *we poor worms of the earth*. … He of infinite purity and holiness, and *we polluted and defiled, wallowing in all kind of sin and uncleanness…*" (II.2-3, 34-35, emphases mine).[54]

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[54] The following passage in *The Whole Duty of Man* also reveal the link between humility and self-condemnation: "you must quicken your humility, by considering your many and great sins…" (III.17, p. 81). It also says regarding petitions that "…in humility, we must acknowledge ourselves utterly unworthy of any of those good things we beg for…" (V.19, p. 119).

Another passage from the *Whole Duty* which gives further evidence to the view of humility inspired by hyper-Augustinian theology can be found in the concluding section on private devotions. The prayer given in order to practice humility says,

> Lord, convince me powerfully of my own wretchedness, make me to see that I am miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and not only dust, but sin; that so in all thy dispensations towards me, I may lay my hand upon my mouth, and heartily acknowledge that I am less than the least of thy mercies, and greater than the greatest of thy judgments. (p. 402)

Strikingly, this prayer petitions God not to help us acknowledge our wretchedness as God sees it, but to see our sinfulness as *greater* than God judges it to be.

b. The Nature/Grace Divide and Implications for Pagan Virtue

We see then how hyper-Augustinian humility, rooted in its profoundly negative view of human nature, can look quite like self-deprecation or even self-hatred, or could appear so to Hume as he broke from his religious upbringing. As I will later argue, however, humility was unpalatable to Hume for more than its self-negating stance. Hyper-Augustinianism's emphasis on the depths of human sin has a number of interrelated implications, each of which have further bearing on how pride and humility come to be understood in this tradition. As I will show in Chapter Three, these additional modifications of how humility becomes conceived increase Hume's objections to it.

The first implication of the extreme view on human fallenness, which in turn shapes accounts of pride and humility in this tradition, is that for hyper-Augustinians the realm of 'nature' and the realm of 'grace' come to look more opposed than standing in a cooperative relationship to one another. If human nature is wholly corrupt, then normal human passions tended to be seen as inherently disordered to the self and incapable of motivating moral action and incapable of pointing us to goodness, to God. By sharp

contrast, God is understood to love with a selfless agape, as do those who are moved by his grace.[55] The divine order of things is thus seen to be something entirely different than, and indeed foreign to, the egoistic mode of living characteristic of human nature.

This conception of the relationship between nature and grace is visible, for instance, in our representative Jansenists. Pascal depicts true Christian virtue as opposing our natural mode of being: Christian virtue involves "disenthrall[ing] the soul from the love of the world—tear[ing] it from what it holds most dear—[making] it die to itself—[lifting] it up and bind[ing] it wholly, only, and forever to God." And he affirms that this "can be the work of none but an all-powerful hand" (OC 376-77).[56] Or again, Pascal says that "the whole of morality [consists in] concupiscence and grace" (P 226). We also see this picture of nature and grace in Nicole's description of self-love, which he thinks rules us all unless God's grace intervenes. He claims that

> corrupt man not only loves himself but loves himself beyond measure, loves only himself, and relates everything to himself. He wants every kind of property, honor, and pleasure, and he wants them only for himself. Placing himself at the center of everything, he would like to rule over everything and wishes that all creatures were occupied with nothing but pleasing him, praising him, and admiring him. This tyrannical disposition, being firmly implanted deep in the hearts of all men, makes them violent, unjust, cruel, ambitious, obsequious, envious, insolent, and quarrelsome. … This is the monster we carry in our bosom; it lives and reigns absolutely within us, unless God has destroyed its reign by

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[55] The drastic difference between the self-love that operates in unredeemed human nature and the selfless charity that is at work in the recipients of God's (effectual) grace can be seen, for example, in Nicole's description of the two: "Nothing is more different from charity, which relates everything to God, than self-love, which relates everything to itself" (CS I, 370). (Nicole distinguishes between general and effectual grace and thinks that the latter is needed for genuine Christian virtue.) Luther thinks that apart from divine assistance our love is always impure and self-directed but that the "believer receives through faith a pure, unselfish love from God, who is himself this love and who gives it to the believer who desires to receive him" (Peura 78-79).

[56] (This passage, which is from *Provincial Letters*, is quoted and translated in Herdt 2008, 237.) The hyper-Augustinian tendency to oppose nature and grace—and then to affirm the "mystical" realm of grace over and above nature—is, I will argue in Chapter Three, the primary target of Hume's critique of Pascal's humility and his claim that this humility is indicative of 'artificial living.'

filling our hearts with a different kind of love [i.e., charity]. It is the principle of all actions that are untouched by anything but corrupt nature… (CS I, 371)[57]

Indeed, Nicole's project of showing how enlightened self-love mimics charity can generally be interpreted as articulating human motivation and action in the realm of unredeemed human nature (Herdt 2008, 247).[58]

The hyper-Augustinian way of construing the relationship between nature and grace can be contrasted with the Christian humanist construal where grace is understood as elevating nature or, as Aquinas put it, as perfecting nature, not destroying it (ST I-I:1.8.r2). As we saw earlier, Aquinas maintains that we have natural inclinations directing us to the perfection of the polis and of the individual and that we can, through habit, develop true, if imperfect, virtues that pertain to the fulfillment of these proximate ends. In this way, we already have a natural orientation toward goodness (even if we also have tendencies to sin and self-enclosure as well) that disposes us to further receptivity to grace (see Shanley 563). In other words, in the Christian humanist model grace is continuous with, not contrary to nature. To love God does not require that we annihilate the self as Pascal put it (OC 1006, 641);[59] it does not require that we utterly break from our nature. Rather, Christian humanists think that we can find in human beings natural movements towards goodness on which to build.

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[57] Nicole does argue that God gives 'general grace' to everyone, and that gives us the power to act virtuously should we choose to do so. He also maintains, however, that we do not in fact choose to act virtuously unless we are one of the few who are also given 'efficacious grace' (Herdt 2008, 252-54). See E.D. James's work on Nicole for a thorough presentation of Nicole's account of grace (1972, 7-44). It is efficacious grace to which Nicole refers in the passage above.

[58] To avoid repetition, examples of a nature/grace dichotomy in Luther and Calvin will be given when I discuss the related second implication of the extreme fallenness view below, i.e., the hyper-Augustinian tendency to see human agency and divine agency disjunctively. Roughly speaking, in this theological framework ungraced human power (which inevitably chooses sin) falls under the realm of nature and human goodness is only possible when divine assistance enables us to operate in the realm of grace.

[59] There Pascal says, "La piété chrétienne anéantit le moi humain…" (translation: Christian piety annihilates the human self).

As we saw previously, because of the Christian humanist conviction that, in spite

of the corrupting effects of the Fall, human nature retains something of its orientation

towards the good, they are able to ascribe genuine virtue to pagans. By contrast, the

hyper-Augustinian juxtaposition of nature and grace led to an even greater intensification

of Augustine's stance on pagan virtue. We saw that in Augustine's account, the direction

of our loves ultimately runs along one of two possible paths: to God or to self. He

accordingly, though somewhat reluctantly when it came to certain pagan exemplars,

thought that apparent pagan virtue was in the end splendid vice because on his model

pagan attempts at virtue could not ultimately escape self-orientation. While Aquinas

spoke of true but imperfect pagan virtue, virtue capable of being directed to our final end,

Augustine was always suspicious that what he thought to be the inescapable self-

reference involved in the pagan pursuit of virtue rendered their actions tacitly or overtly

motivated by pride. Similarly, we saw that the hyper-Augustinian stance on human

depravity, coupled with its rejection of eudaimonism and its tendency to dichotomize

nature and grace, creates an either/or that makes pagan (and hypocritically Christian)

virtue impossible: either the Christian is capable of genuine virtue through God's grace or

the person is stuck with her own dark nature and at best can produce only (false) worldly

virtue, which has little or no spiritual value.[60] (The difference between the Christian

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[60] Pascal's critique of the Jesuits reveals his gloomy stance with respect the possibility of pagan virtue (see Herdt 2008, 235-38). The following aphorism from *Pensées* sums up his view quite well: "*Nature is corrupt.* Without Christ man can only be vicious and wretched. With Christ man is free from vice and wretchedness. … Apart from him there is only vice, wretchedness, error, darkness, death, despair" (P 416). In Nicole, apparent charity, if in the pagan or would-be Christian, is merely an enlightened form of self-love, of that "monster that we carry in our bosom" (CS I, 371). Luther maintains "it is evident that in theology the work does not amount to anything without faith, but that faith must precede before you can do [genuinely good] works. For 'without faith it is impossible to please God,…' (Heb. 11:6)" (LW 26, 264). Calvin claims that the non-elect who pursue virtue do so out of the impure motives of self-interest or prideful desire to avoid shame and to rise above others in dignity (ICR II.3.3, 179-180). He therefore concludes that "the virtues which deceive us by an empty show may have their praise in civil society and

humanists and hyper-Augustinians on the issue of pagan virtue is visible in their

respective attitudes towards the ancients. Aquinas had the deepest respect for Aristotle,

calling him "The Philosopher" and adopting much of his ethics; Erasmus writes in one of

his *Colloquia* "Saint Socrates, pray for us!" (155, 158). Luther, by contrast, claims that

Aristotle's "book on ethics is the worst of all books," since "it flatly opposes divine grace

and all Christian virtue" (LW 44, 201).)

This hyper-Augustinian stance on pagan virtue led to important differences in

their conceptions of pride and humility when compared to Christian humanist

conceptions. First of all, hyper-Augustinians seem to regard pride as being more

prevalent, for it is pride (and self-love) that hyper-Augustinians saw as reigning in the

human heart and standing behind human action in the un-graced realm of nature, whether

those actions are overtly evil or bear a seeming resemblance to the good.[61] I will soon

explain how the Protestant Reformers were especially keen to emphasize our thorough

moral incapacity, so much so that the thought that we contribute in some way to our

moral progress is itself seen as an assertion of pride. For reasons that I will soon explain,

the Jansenists tended not to stress our moral ineptitude in the same way. Still, they saw

pride as dominating in the sphere of unredeemed human nature, and with the Protestant

Reformers, they worried that aspiration to virtue through habituation could in fact further

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the common intercourse of life, but before the judgment seat of God they will be of no value to establish a claim of righteousness" (ICR II.3.4, 180).

[61] To give but one example, Nicole says that "Christian virtue destroys and annihilates self-love and that human *honnêteté* hides and suppresses it. This *honnêteté*, then, which the pagan sages idolized, is actually just a more intelligent and more adroit self-love than that of the world at large" (CS IV, 375). In other words, while worldly virtue may appear to be true virtue, it in fact has the mere veneer of virtue, for underneath it is motivated by vicious self-love. (Nicole regards pride to be an aspect of self-love. In his description of the core characteristics of self-love, we find the following: "Placing himself at the center of everything, he would like to rule over everything and wishes that all creatures were occupied with nothing but pleasing him, praising him, and admiring him" (CS I, 371). These are characteristics of pride as he describes it in vol. I, essay I of the *Moral Essays*. Thus, for Nicole the pride, which he says is ever with us (CS V, 376), is a form of self-love that motivates much of worldly virtue.)

entrench pride and self-love, rather than, as the Christian humanists were apt to think, constitute moral development and openness to God. So, for Luther, the person who attempts to cultivate virtue by her own efforts not only fails to form true virtue but in fact allows pride to root itself more deeply within her, as she habituates herself to think she can attain goodness (see Herdt 2008, 14-15). Pascal critiqued the Jesuits (including Gracián, who made the pursuit of greatness morally central), as merely cultivating a pagan virtue, which was in fact only pleasantly disguised vice (see Herdt 2008, 235-37). With such phenomena counting as pride, and with the corresponding resistance to admit good forms of pride (such as magnanimity), then pride appears, as Nicole says of the natural man, never to leave us (CS V, 376).

Second, not only do hyper-Augustinians see pride as more rampant; they also regard true humility to be impossible for pagans and inauthentic Christians. We saw that Aquinas opens up the possibility for pagans to cultivate true, if imperfect, humility. I briefly suggested that this sort of humility would involve awareness of our weaknesses and failings but also an appreciation for the ways that our strengths are dependent upon the help of others, environmental factors, and moral luck. It would furthermore include receptivity to others, reverence for their humanity, and awareness that they may have strengths of which we stand in need, even if those strengths are not immediately apparent to us. Such humility in turn would be capable of being directed to a fuller humility before God, but it has an intelligible connection to the natural human good apart from specific theological commitments. For hyper-Augustinians, however, genuine humility is not to be found among the unredeemed.

In Nicole's account, for example, although the self-love that rules in the realm of nature succeeds in imitating humility perfectly, this so-called humility is in fact nothing more than a "finer and more delicate sentiment of that pride which is born with man and which does not forsake him at all" (CS V, 376). Truly enlightened self-love sees that we will better gain the love of others not by hiding all of our faults but by admitting them, for by doing so we seem more humanly imperfect (CS VII, 378). In contrast to Aquinas, Nicole does not see the possibility for genuine secular humility. Such humility is a mere mask for pride.

Indeed, for the Jansenists, true contrition (an aspect of humility) is a divine gift (see Herdt 2008, 236). Luther likewise affirms that humility is also given by God. The early Luther held that humility, the recognition of our need for grace, was the sole human act regarded by God as meritorious and which fulfills the covenant condition for justification (McGrath 1999, 106; Herdt 2008, 177). After Luther's breakthrough, however, he held that we were incapable even of coming to this awareness on our own. Since we are powerless to humble ourselves (for trying to do so would, Luther thinks, be attempting to earn God's favor by our own power), God must humble us. God does so through his *opus alienum*, his alien work, of threatening us with Hell. This forces us to recognize our sinfulness and to be humbled by Christ bearing the wrath of God on our behalf. It is God who humbles us not we who humble ourselves, the mature Luther maintains (Herdt 2008, 177).

c. The Passivity of Human Agency

Thus far we have seen that hyper-Augustinian humility centrally involves recognizing our depravity and that it is unavailable to non-Christians. We have also seen

that hyper-Augustinian pride is thought to be a pervasive vice and that there is little or no

sense among hyper-Augustinians that there are good forms of pride.[62] I next want to

discuss a second implication of the utter fallenness view—namely, the tendency to speak

of human and divine agency (i.e., grace) disjunctively—and to show how this leads to

shifts in how the dependency aspect of humility is understood, particularly for the

Protestant Reformers. Hyper-Augustinians tended to think that one consequence of our

total corruption is that we are incapable of goodness through our own power. As such,

theologians of this perspective (again, especially Protestant Reformers) were inclined to

speak of divine and human agency in competitive terms: *either* the human being acts on

her own initiative and inevitably mires herself in sin *or* she assumes a posture of passivity

while the grace of God operates within her to act with selfless love, with true virtue.[63]

This can be contrasted with Christian humanism, where human agency and divine

agency are seen as cooperative. Aquinas insists, for example, that even the theological

virtues are infused in such a way as to join with rather than to displace human agency.[64]

Erasmus's famous analogy of the child reaching for the apple with the father's loving

guidance similarly suggests that grace enables rather than supersedes human agency

(CFW 87).[65] The hyper-Augustinians, however, are more likely to speak of grace as an

alien force, wresting us from our own depravity. Thus, although Christian humanists and

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[62] While the Jansenists affirm that we are made for greatness through God's strength (see footnote 49), and while the Protestant Reformers would advocate glorying in what God has done through us, neither could affirm that genuine non-Christian magnanimity is possible, and to my knowledge there is no account of Christian magnanimity among these thinkers.

[63] I am indebted, once again, to Herdt 2008. Her analysis of this point, as it is one of the primary themes of her book. See page 2 for her initial discussion of this issue.

[64] Aquinas saw grace as elevating nature rather than destroying it. See especially where Aquinas denies that the Holy Spirit acts upon a human being as one who has no agency but instead says that when given divine grace the human being "is so acted upon by the Holy Ghost, that he also acts himself, in so far as he has a free will" (ST I-II:68.3.r2).

[65] See Herdt's discussion of Erasmus's account of grace (2008, 112-15).

hyper-Augustinians together affirm dependency on God's grace and include a glad acceptance of this dependency in their conceptions of humility, for the Protestant Reformers in particular, this dependency aspect involves taking a passive stance in which human agency is (thought to be) deserted, letting God's grace transform the person from within.[66]

Since Pascal and Nicole, unlike Luther and Calvin, saw justification and sanctification as a joint process, their conception of humility does not include the same emphasis on passivity. On the Jansenists' account (and for Catholic theologians in general), we make use of the graces that we have been given when acting with charity, and God gives further graces that we again use in the process of becoming more deeply charitable (see Herdt 2008, 236). Although the Jansenists thought that we were wholly incapable of true repentance (an aspect of humility) apart from grace, their conception of justification and sanctification, as a unified, slow process of healing in which the agent is involved, prevents them from stressing passivity to the degree that the Reformers did (Herdt 2008, 236).[67] Again, a key difference here is that Luther and Calvin see justification as distinct from sanctification and regard a perfect awareness of our incapacity to be present in order for justification (and hence for salvation and for the ensuing sanctifying growth into the likeness of Christ) to occur, whereas the Jansenists allow for an ever-growing awareness of our incapacity and dependency on God's grace

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[66] McGrath explicitly describes Luther's stance on justification as involving passivity on the part of the human being. For Luther, he says, "In justification, God is active and humans are passive" (1999, 113).

[67] Jansenists agreed that efficacious grace was irresistible (i.e., the person who was offered grace could not but be responsive to it) but they also insisted that we accept that grace voluntarily, freely (Herdt 2008, 236). The idea is that human agency is involved in true Christian virtue but that it is graced agency (Herdt 2008, 237). We accept the grace we have been given and thereby become capable of responding to further graces. (I do not know the Jansenist position on divine and human agency well enough to assess whether this position is coherent. My aim is merely to show that the component of passivity in Jansenist humility is weaker than in Protestant humility.)

over time.[68] Pascal hopes that his descriptions of our self-deception in the *Pensées* will

help us to realize that "we are incapable of attaining the good by our own efforts" (P 148)

and that "without Christ man can only be vicious and wretched" (P 416). Nicole

concludes his meditation on pride and humility by saying: "Let us therefore not seek for

strength in the Nature of Man. On which side soever we look on it, we shall find naught

but weakness and impotency. In God only, and his Grace we ought to seek for it" (ME

I.I.LXV, 34). But the assertion that we cannot trust solely in our own power does not

mean that human agency plays no role responding to grace,[69] even if, in contrast to

Christian humanists, the Jansenists affirm that human nature is so damaged that it utterly

lacks orientation toward the good apart from grace.[70] The Jansenists were perhaps more

liable than Christian humanists to speak in the language of passivity—that of

relinquishing our will to God instead of seeking to align our will to God's through

cooperative process of transformation. Nevertheless, for the Jansenists such recognition

of our utter dependency on grace—such humility—can dawn on one gradually in and

through Christian practice (see Herdt 2008, 240-47 for this point in Pascal).

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[68] Additionally, while the Jansenists sought to distinguish themselves from what they thought was the Jesuit tendency to over-emphasize the power of human agency, so too did they criticize the Quietists' false renunciation of human agency (Herdt 2008, 238).

[69] Indeed, in the *Pensées* Pascal advocates engaging in Christian practices as if one believed (e.g., going to mass, taking holy water, etc.) in order to acquire genuine belief over time (P 418)—a view Herdt interprets as indicating that God's grace can be given in and through human aspiration and habituation (see Herdt 2008, 239).

[70] Michael Moriarty explains Pascal's position well on this point (2003, 146-150): Pascal understands efficacious grace as God causing us to delight in the law of God (it is 'efficacious' grace because it brings about the effect). Pascal therefore insists that human agency is preserved when we (necessarily) respond to efficacious grace because we are acting in the manner in which we now (because of grace) most want to act. In this way Pascal tries to distance himself from Luther and Calvin, who tended to minimize human agency. But since Pascal thinks that original sin has left us in a thoroughly corrupt state, we are not capable of wanting to fulfill the commandments of God without efficacious grace (150). Nicole takes a similar position, while granting that God gives 'general grace' to all (see Herdt 2008, 250-53; James 7-21).

The Protestant Reformers, by contrast, who were concerned to protect the idea that we in no way earn salvation, made awareness of our utter incapacity foundational to the Christian life. Salvation, they argued, is a gift that we receive solely through faith by God's merciful grace, for, as Luther famously put it, justification is by faith alone; it is not merited by our works.[71] The Catholic tradition thought that we are justified before God (and likewise merit salvation) to the extent that we are sanctified (i.e., have grown in Christ-likeness), even if God's grace is needed for us to become the kinds of persons that merit salvation. But to the Reformers, because the cooperative model of divine and human agency that was dominant in Catholic theology suggests that we must *do* something of merit by partnering with divine help, this model was rejected.[72] Over and against this, Luther and Calvin insisted that we are justified not by our character or works but by receiving God's gift of mercy, whereby Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. They were therefore especially eager to show that we have no grounds for claiming credit for our salvation or for our moral and spiritual growth, for anything we do to contribute to our own goodness could serve as a basis for boasting of our own merit. Furthermore, once justification is separated from and made foundational to sanctification, their insistence upon our full recognition of our inability to do good or to merit salvation becomes necessary from the inception of the Christian life. Otherwise stated, it becomes necessary humbly to affirm our utter incapacity in order to be justified/saved (see Herdt

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[71] See the following passage for Calvin's affirmation that salvation is wholly due to God's grace: "When the will is enchained as the slave of sin [which he argues in this section and in ICR II.2 is necessarily the case in the non-elect], it cannot make a movement toward goodness, far less steadily pursue it. Every such movement is the first step in that conversion to God, which in Scripture is entirely ascribed to divine grace" (ICR II.3.5, 180). Additionally, Calvin interprets the psalmist in Psalm 100:3 as follows: "Not contented with simply giving God the praise of our salvation, he distinctly excludes us from all share in it, just as if he had said that not one particle remains to man as a ground of boasting. The whole is of God" (ICR II.3.6, 183).

[72] Calvin expressly denies such a cooperative model of divine and human agency (ICR II.2.6, 161 and especially II.3.12, 187-88).

2008, 183, 199-200), for failure to take this stance, they thought, just shows that we are still operating under the idea that we can in some way earn salvation.

More specifically, according to Luther, since humans are utterly fallen, and since we have no way of crossing the divide between fallen human nature and true Christian righteousness through our own initiative, we must *begin* by recognizing this incapacity and relinquishing our attempts to make ourselves righteous by our works.[73] Luther thought that the spiritual practices advocated by the Catholic Church as well as the classical idea that virtues develop through habituation as is seen in Aristotle, falsely depend upon thinking that we can contribute to our own righteousness. As such, he regards seeking to produce good works in ourselves as an expression of pride, which merely serves to entrench in us a sinful confidence in our own capacities and a tendency to think that we can claim credit for our character (Herdt 2008, 14-15). Above we saw that for Luther (and Calvin) humbly recognizing our utter *sinfulness* and need for God's mercy is a starting point for beginning in Christian virtue. Now we see that additionally this humility involves being aware of one's moral *inability* and, moreover, taking a stance of pure passivity, abandoning human agency and letting God work to transform oneself inwardly (LW 44, 72).[74] Even God's law, for Luther, does not exist primarily to guide us morally. First and foremost, it functions to lead us to humility by revealing to us our utter inability to fulfill it and thereby to drive us to despair of ourselves (see LW 31, 348) so that we cease striving and "let God alone work in us" (LW 44, 72).

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[73] Herdt develops this point (2008, 174-75).
[74] See also where Luther says that "our accursed hypocrisy refuses to be merely passive matter but wants to accomplish the things that it should patiently permit God to accomplish in it" (LW 26, 159). Simo Peura shows how for Luther confidence in one's own powers not only constitutes disobedience but is a form of idolatry as well (1998, 79-84).

Calvin likewise sees any assertion of human effort to be manifestations of self-love and of prideful boasting. He says, for instance,

> Owing to the innate self-love by which all are blinded, we most willingly persuade ourselves that we do not possess a single quality which is deserving of hatred; and hence, independent of any countenance from without, general credit is given to the very foolish idea, that man is perfectly sufficient of himself for all the purposes of a good and happy life. If any are disposed to think more modestly, and concede somewhat to God, that they may not seem to arrogate every thing as their own, still, in making the division, they apportion matters so, that the chief ground of confidence and boasting always remains with themselves. Then, if a discourse is pronounced which flatters the pride spontaneously springing up in man's inmost heart, nothing seems more delightful. (ICR II.1.2, 148)[75]

Calvin thus renounces the idea that we contribute in any way to our character.[76] Indeed, he takes it that he has shown it to be "beyond dispute, that free will does not enable any man to perform good works, unless he is assisted by grace; indeed, the special grace which the elect alone receive through regeneration" (ICR II.2.6, 161). He moreover thinks that failure to accept our utter inability to do good is a failure to have due confidence in God. He says,

> Never shall we have sufficient confidence in him unless utterly distrustful of ourselves; never shall we take courage in him until we first despond of ourselves; never shall we have full consolation in him until we cease to have any in ourselves. (ICR III.12.8, 497)

Like Luther, then, the sort of self-knowledge constitutive of humility for Calvin therefore involves not only awareness that we are "utterly destitute" (ICR II.1.1, 147), but it also "indispose[s] us to every thing like confidence in our own powers, leave[s] us devoid of all means of boasting, and so incline[s] us to submission" (ICR II.1.2, 147). Moreover, Calvin, with Luther, suggests that human passivity is constitutive of the kind

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[75] He also says, "The philosophers who have contended most strongly that virtue is to be desired on her own account, were so inflated with arrogance as to make it apparent that they sought virtue for no other reason than as a ground for indulging in pride" (ICR III.7.2, 450).

[76] See also ICR II.2.1-3, pp. 157-159 for a discussion of our moral impotence.

of humility that is important for justification/salvation and hence for the Christian life that is founded upon it. It is entirely God's grace that does the work of salvation; to think human effort plays a role is to boast. Catherine Pickstock goes so far as to say that Calvin reduces salvation to "simply accepting a transaction carried out by God on our behalf" (1998, 156-57).[77] It seems that what is lost with the cooperation model is a sense of communion between Creator and creature whereby that person's will is transformed to love as Christ loves. Calvin's insistence on our incapacity makes it seem as though divine assistance annihilates the person's will, rather than preserving and transforming it.

Recognition not only of our wretchedness but also of our of our utter inability to reform our condition is present in the conception of humility given in the *Whole Duty of Man* as well:

> And even when this humility has brought us to obedience, it is not then to be cast off, as if we had no further use of it; for there is still great use, nay necessity of it, to keep us from high conceits of our performances, which if we once entertain, it will blast the best of them, and make them utterly unacceptable to God… The best of our works are so full of infirmary and pollution, that if we compare them with that perfection and purity which is in God, we may truly say with the *prophet, All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, Isaiah 64.6*. and therefore to pride ourselves in them, is the same madness, that it would be in a beggar to brag of his apparel, when it is nothing but vile rags and tatters… If, when we have done all, we must give ourselves no better a title, what are we then to esteem ourselves, that are so far from doing any considerable part of what we are commanded? Surely that worker name of *slothful* and *wicked servant*, Matt. 25.26. we have no reason to think too bad for us. (II.4, 35-36)

This passage indicates that whatever we do of our own efforts is defiled. It is prideful conceit, this passage suggests, to approve of our actions or to think that we had some hand in whatever is good in us.

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[77] Note how impossible it is to avoid language of human agency altogether (revealing, I think, the incoherence of the Reformers' position on divine and human agency). Here we "accept" the transaction.

In sum, then, this tendency to see human and divine agency disjunctively led to important changes in how pride and humility are conceived. If we in truth can contribute nothing to our own moral improvement, it becomes prideful to think that we can and to strive to make an effort at it. Also, it is a mark of pride to be pleased with ourselves for any goodness we possess, since we are in no way responsible for such goodness. While Augustine stressed acknowledging our dependency on God for our goodness, hyper-Augustinians were more prone to focus on our utterly inability as the mode by which we appropriately appreciate divine assistance. But with this shift, humility, at least in the Protestant Reformers, takes on an air of passivity. The only thing we can "do" is to relinquish all striving and receive the gift of God's grace.

d. Mistrust of Reason and Theological Voluntarism

I will argue in Chapter Three that Hume's critique of humility for involving servility and meanness targets, in part, this emphasis on passivity that emerges in the Protestant Reformers' accounts of humility. This note of servility takes on a stronger tone, however, when passivity is combined with the third implication of hyper-Augustinianism, namely, a greater mistrust of reason. Reason becomes less reliable for hyper-Augustinians because it, too, being part of our nature, suffered the deeply corrupting effects of the Fall. Also, the Fall left the heart so depraved that it often leads reason to justify its own desires rather than to seek truth, especially pertaining to moral or spiritual matters. We are prone to self-deception, all of our representative hyper-Augustinians affirm. This leads to yet another alteration in how pride and humility is understood: too much trust in one's own reason comes to be regarded as prideful, while humility can even involve denigrating reason.

Luther is, at points, especially strong in his depreciation of reason. In his last sermon in Wittenburg he calls reason "the devil's bride" (LW 51, 374) and a "mangy, leprous whore" (LW 51, 376). He says that "reason mocks and affronts God in spiritual things and has in it more hideous harlotry than any harlot" (LW 51, 374), that "reason is *by nature* a harmful whore" (LW 51, 376, emphasis mine), and that "Reason is and should be drowned in baptism" (LW 51, 376). He urges us to "[t]hrow dirt in her face and make her ugly" (LW 51, 376) and to "trample reason and its wisdom under foot and say, 'You cursed whore, shut up! Are you trying to seduce me into committing fornication with the devil?" (LW 51, 376-77).[78] He similarly says in his Commentary on Galatians, that every Christian "offers and slaughters his reason" and ought "daily and perpetually" engage in the practice of "kill[ing] the reason" and glorifying God (LW 26, 233).

Luther's more extreme statements against reason arise in the context of his discussions about our tendency to use reason as part of our perpetual project of relying on ourselves rather than trusting in the promises of God,[79] and Luther thus should by no means be interpreted as rejecting reason wholesale. Still, however, Luther's position on reason is a far cry from the view of Aquinas, who thinks that humans by nature, Christian or pagan, have the ability to reason about the human good, that doing so is part of what is

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[78] In this sermon Luther is condemning reason's tendency to arrive at theological conclusions that are different from what he regards to be clearly communicated in Scripture (here he mentions Roman Catholics who endorse praying to saints and the Anabaptists who see baptism as a mere symbol). He under-appreciates the extent to which there can be legitimate hermeneutical disagreement, however. He, like many hyper-Augustinians, is too quick and emphatic in diagnosing alternative interpretations as stemming from "self-love" and "a passion for [one's] own wisdom" (LW 51, 377), rather than seeing them as possibly honest attempts to understand a difficult text.

[79] Luther tends to denounce (in a polemical manner) whatever threatens to prevent people from receiving and holding fast to what he believes to be the greatest good for human beings—i.e., the promises of the Gospel. See, for example, LW 28, 63-75 for a sermon that gives clear expression to Luther's worries about reason's potential for interfering with salvation by introducing doubt.

involved developing practical wisdom (which is needed for genuine virtue), and that faith

is the fulfillment of reason.[80]

Though Pascal did not denigrate reason to the extent of the Protestant Reformers,

he did think that there was no neutral standpoint of reason upon which to view the human

situation. He argued instead that we can only truly know ourselves and our condition

through knowing Christ (P 417). As we saw above, Pascal admits that the doctrine of

original sin, which constitutes a deep truth about ourselves, is "shocking to our reason."

He therefore says that "it is not through the proud activity of our reason but through its

simple submission that we can really know ourselves" (P 131).[81] Pascal likewise hopes

that when we truly see that we are inheritors of original sin and that "we are incapable of

attaining the good by our own efforts" (P 148), we will see that virtue is not within our

grasp apart from faith. For without faith, we "know neither true good nor justice" (P

148).[82] From Pascal's perspective, however, accepting our wretchedness and our need for

faith is not ultimately opposed to reason; on the contrary, Pascal thinks that when pride

dominates our rational activities, we are prevented from seeing how Christian truths

illuminate the human condition.[83] But unlike Aquinas, he has no confidence one can

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[80] Luther, in contrast to Aquinas, stresses that faith in the promises of God is an offense to reason (LW 26, 231).

[81] Pascal furthermore says that God uses hiddenness, incomprehensibility, and obscurity to blind the reprobate (P 236) and to humble the pride of those who are open to God (P 234, 236). Pascal says, for example, "God wishes to move the will rather than the mind. Perfect clarity would help the mind and harm the will. Humble their pride" (P 334).

[82] Nicole was perhaps unique among the Jansenists for implying that there is a neutral standpoint of reason that persists in spite of the corrupting effects of the Fall (James 44; Herdt 2008, 248). However, as I will later explain, once worldly virtue can be articulated from a neutral standpoint of reason, the realm of true, graced, Christian virtue can seem to become increasingly mysterious, incomprehensible, and irrelevant. Ironically, the way that Nicole affirms reason's role in moral matters serves to open up space for critique of his affirmation of the selfless stance of charity as the proper mode of human existence.

[83] Pascal says, "Men despise religion. They hate it and are afraid it may be true. The cure for this is first to show that religion is not contrary to reason, but worthy of reverence and respect. … Worthy of reverence because it really understands human nature" (P 12). For a helpful exposition on Pascal's account of the place of reason and the heart in his account of knowledge, see Jean Khalfa 2003.

reason well about the moral life or can have significant insight into the human condition apart from the Christian faith.

The Protestant Reformers, whose depreciation of reason's place in the moral life is more extreme than Pascal's, is so in part because they embrace theological voluntarism.[84] Theological voluntarism is the view that God's will is what *makes* something good. That is, there is no standard of goodness external to the will of God by which reason can judge God's actions to be good or evil; rather, God's will just *is* the standard of goodness. Accordingly, for theological voluntarists, humans ultimately know what is good, not by reason but by faith in divine revelation, wherein God communicates his will for us, especially in the form of divine commands. On this view, then, even if human reason were not corrupted by the Fall, we still could not fundamentally rely on reason for moral discernment, for it is not our reason but God's self-revelation through Scripture that gives us access to God's will. Calvin additionally insists that it is sinful to seek knowledge of the causes of the divine will, since the very demand for such knowledge impiously implies that there is something greater than God's will itself (ICR III.23.2, 626).

Generally the more that reason is seen to be limited, the more assertions that go beyond such limits will be seen as expressing pride. Pascal's view requires that reason be submissive to faith on precisely those points of traditional Christian doctrine that admit reasonable doubt and that failure to do so (perhaps out of earnest struggle) constitutes

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[84] Calvin's voluntarism is clear in his statements like the following: "God's will is the supreme rule of righteousness, so that everything which he wills must be held to be righteous by the mere fact of his willing it. Therefore, when it is asked why the Lord did so, we must answer, Because he pleased. But if you proceed farther to ask why he pleased, you ask for something greater and more sublime than the will of God, and nothing such can be found" (ICR III.23.2, 626).

pride.[85] Similarly, when a dark view of human nature is connected to theological

voluntarism as it was by the Protestant Reformers, the restrictive role given to reason

leads them to regard questioning Scripture or God's commands, or even relying on one's

moral insight instead of divine revelation, to be pridefully extending beyond the bounds

of proper humility before God. Humility, by contrast, involves putting aside reason and

trusting God's Word if there is a seeming conflict between the two. Luther says, for

instance, that "[Christians] have regard for God's Word, and, *now humbled, have learned*

that they should not rely on their own wisdom and reason, or upon human help and

comfort."[86] And again Luther says, "the highest and first work of God in us and the best

training is that we let our own works go and *let our reason and will lie dormant*, resting

and commending ourselves to God in all things" (LW 44, 74, emphasis mine).

While Calvin is slightly more optimistic about reason than Luther, his hyper-

Augustinian and theological voluntarist convictions still lead him to maintain that

> …we are not to seek our own, but the Lord's will, and act with a view to promote his glory. *Great is our proficiency, when, almost forgetting ourselves, certainly postponing our own reason, we faithfully make it our study to obey God and his commandments*. … We have not yet sufficiently explained how great and numerous are the obstacles by which a man is impeded in the pursuit of rectitude, so long as he has not renounced himself. The old saying is true, There is a world of iniquity treasured up in the human soul. *Nor can you find any other remedy for this than to deny yourself, renounce your own reason, and direct your whole mind to the pursuit of those things which the Lord requires of you, and which you are to seek only because they are pleasing to him*. (ICR III.7.2, 450, emphases mine)

We not only see here that seeking to follow God's will (fulfilling the submission aspect

of humility) involves self-denial, articulated in a way that is characteristic of the anti-

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[85] See P 168, for example, where Pascal calls it foolishness not to believe in the Eucharist. But why should reasonable doubt be branded a moral failing?

[86] This quote is from p. 74 of Luther's sermon entitled "The Reward of Humility," given on the Third Sunday After Trinity and found in Vol. 8 of *Sermons of Martin Luther* (see Past Masters, electronic edition).

eudaimonism and nature/grace dichotomy typically expressed in hyper-Augustinianism.

We also see that this obedient self-forgetfulness involves "postponing" or "renouncing"

our own reason in deference to God's will. (Again, the difference between the Protestant

Reformers and Aquinas on this point is readily apparent, for Aquinas thinks that the self

and one's rational capacities are fulfilled, not renounced, through seeking obedience to

God's will.)

We see the connection between humility and renunciation of reason in *The Whole

Duty of Man* as well:

> But I told you, humility contained in it not only a submission to his will, but also
> to his wisdom; that is, to acknowledge him infinitely wise, and therefore that
> whatever he doth is best and fittest to be done. And this we are to confess both in
> his commands, and in his disposing and ordering of things. First, whatsoever he
> commands us either to believe or do, we are to submit to his wisdom in both, to
> believe whatsoever he bids us believe, how impossible soever it seems to our
> shallow understandings, and to do whatever he commands us to do, how contrary
> soever it be to our fleshly reason or humour, and in both to conclude, that his
> commands are most fit and reasonable, however they appear to us. (II.1.9, 40-41)

It seems from this passage that it does not matter at all if the (supposed) actions or

commands of God run counter to any (possibly very deep) conviction into the good that

we might have. Humility requires us to deny our own insight (our "fleshly reason") and

to believe whatever God seems to bid. I will show in Chapter Two how damaging Hume

saw such a view to be insofar as it not only stifles intellectual maturation (a problem that

has psychologically as well as socially harmful ramifications) but, what is more, it

becomes morally and spiritually *imperative* that one cease questioning and do whatever

one perceives God's will to be. This could put great pressure on the earnest individual for

whom raising reasonable questions could be condemned as manifesting a sin as damnable

as pride. I will also argue in Chapter Three that the denigration of reason involved in

hyper-Augustinian (particularly Calvinist) humility led Hume to critique it as involving servility and meanness, characteristics that Hume saw to be especially vicious.

IV. Conclusion

Despite the arguably admirable sensitivity to spiritual struggle, longing for purity of love, and willingness to grapple seriously with human darkness that we find in hyper-Augustinianism, it is not hard to imagine how the sort of Christian humility to which Hume was exposed would have seemed to him to be quite dangerous, especially when humility as it is perceived in popular religious culture can lack some of the important qualifications that trained theologians may have given it. *The Whole Duty of Man*, as we saw above, first describes humility as "unfeigned submission" (II.1, 34), and a sort of submission that involves denial of human desire, of reason, and of will/agency, fundamentally depreciates humanity and earthly existence. Hume's attempt to establish an ethic that affirms ordinary life and basic human happiness stands in opposition to such a view. I will show in Chapter Three how, against the backdrop of Hume's secular ethics rooted in human happiness, his objections to Christian humility are deep and carry implications for the ways in which religion can be significantly destructive with respect to individual and social flourishing.

Prior to considering Hume's critiques of Christian humility, however, I will first need, in the next chapter, to offer Hume's critiques of Christian morality in general and to summarize Hume's ethics of ordinary life. Ironically, many have argued that the hyper-Augustinian trajectory paved the way for Hume's secularization of ethics.[87] On the one

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[87] See, for example, Charles Taylor 1989 (see especially chp. 13, 16, 19, 20) and 2007 (see especially chp. 6-7), Michael Gill 2006, Alasdair MacIntyre 1988 (especially chp. XV), and Jennifer Herdt 2008.

hand, the gloomy picture of human nature and denunciation of much of ordinary human desire provided impetus away from the theological outlook that undergirded such views. On the other hand, the sharp dichotomizing of the realms of nature and grace ended up making the realm of nature appear increasingly intelligible on its own terms and the realm of grace increasingly mysterious and unnecessary.

Herdt has argued that in fact Nicole's project of providing a "moral anatomy" of worldly virtue plays such a secularizing role (2008, 221-22, 261). As mentioned above, Nicole's articulation of worldly virtue from the standpoint of neutral reason gives morality a kind of independence from religion that it had not previously enjoyed in the other Jansenist thinkers who provided moral anatomies or indeed in many thinkers in the Christianized West. Additionally, Nicole admits, in contrast to Pascal, that worldly happiness can be genuine, not simply a diversion from underlying despair (Herdt 2008, 253). In this context, however, Nicole's discussion of the graced life of charity becomes increasingly opaque whereas his account of worldly virtue and happiness shows human behavior in the sphere of nature to be comprehensible without reference to religion (see Herdt 2008, 16-17, 222, 261).

Like Nicole, Hume's account of ethics involves providing a moral anatomy— specifically, an anatomy of our moral sentiments and language. Unlike Nicole, he drops what he regards to be an epistemologically unfounded appeal to the realm of grace. Moreover, we will see that Hume's moral anatomy opposes Nicole's claim that all worldly virtue stems from self-love insofar as it shows how natural sympathy is a dominant principle in human nature and is the condition for the possibility of our common language of moral praise and blame. In this way, Hume finds a principle in the

realm of nature that allows him to deny its utter depravity. For Hume, any so-called "redemptive" forces for human life spring from within human nature itself, not from some external, transcendent source.[88]

Not only does Hume insist that sympathy and benevolence are natural, thus denying that the hyper-Augustinian view that human nature is profoundly selfish. He also approves of certain forms of self-love and worldly desire that the hyper-Augustinians would have condemned as sinful. In other words, much of what hyper-Augustinians took to be indicative of wretchedness, Hume accepts as simply and even unproblematically human. Pride is just one of those passions to which we are prone that, in opposition to the hyper-Augustinian view, Hume accepts and, with certain qualifications, elevates. As will become apparent in Chapter Four, Hume, like Nicole, sees pride as a dominant motivator in human life. But because, unlike Nicole, he distinguishes between good and bad forms of pride, he is able to show how virtuous pride is central to moral motivation, a point I explore most fully in Chapter Three. Before we can appreciate Hume's account of pride and humility and his critique of their opposite placements in the traditional Christian catalogue of virtues and vices, however, we will need to look more at Hume's ethic of ordinary life and his reasons for rejecting the dominant forms of Christian morality in which Christian accounts of pride and humility find their place. This is the topic to which I will turn in the next chapter.

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[88] Although Hume undoubtedly read Nicole (Mossner 1980, 102)**,** Nicole was likely more of an indirect influence on Hume by way of the imprint that Nicole left upon Mandeville and Smith. Nicole's contention that (enlightened) self-love perfectly mimics charity carries with it the idea that we can benefit others while pursuing our selfish ends (see Schneewind 2003, 370). This bears obvious influence on Mandeville's confidence that private vice will lead to public benefit and, in turn, on Hume's friend Adam Smith's notion of the invisible hand.

CHAPTER TWO: HUME'S CRITIQUE OF RELIGIOUS MORALITY AND HIS
SECULAR ETHIC OF ORDINARY LIFE

*"Upon the whole, I desire to take my Catalogue of Virtues from Cicero's Offices, not
from the Whole Duty of Man. I had, indeed, the former Book in my Eye in all my
Reasonings" (LDH #13, letter to Hutcheson Sept. 17, 1739)*

"The Church is my Aversion." (NL #10, letter to Henry Home, end of June, 1747)

*"The worst speculative Sceptic ever I knew, was a much better Man than the best
superstitious Devotee and Bigot." (LDH #72, letter to Gilbert Elliot of Minto, March 10,
1751)*

*"I believe I shall write no more History; but proceed directly to attack the Lord's Prayer
& the ten Commandments & the single Cat[echism]; and to recommend Suicide &
Adultery: And so persist, till it shall please the Lord to take me to himself." (NL #25,
letter to Captain James Edmonstoune of Newton, Sept. 29, 1757)*

The previous chapter discussed the two dominant theological trajectories in the

Western Christian tradition—Christian humanism and hyper-Augustinianism—and

showed how pride and humility is differently understood within their respective

theological frameworks. Despite the crucial differences in their conceptions of pride and

humility and the theological commitments that shape these conceptions, both traditions

regard pride and humility as morally central categories where humility is seen as a key

virtue and pride the chief vice. I will argue in the next chapter that Hume's opposite

evaluation of pride and humility contains a critique of Christian morality that runs quite

deep. In order to show adequately the significance of Hume's objections to Christian

humility and his rehabilitation of pride as a virtue, however, it will be necessary in this

chapter to look at some of the larger moral and religious issues at stake in this shift.

Thus, my aim here is provide an overview of Hume's critique of religious morality (and

specifically to Christian morality when relevant) and his attempt arguably to replace it by developing a purely secular ethic of common life rooted in social praise and blame.[1]

Hume's secular account of ethics was quite radical in his time insofar as it rejects the claim that a transcendent moral source—i.e., God—is in any way necessary to ground or to motivate morality. We can appreciate the controversial nature of Hume's position when we look at how it opposes the two distinct ways of conceiving of the dependence of ethics on religion based on the eighteenth century distinction between natural and revealed religion. Natural religion, a term for what we now tend to call natural theology, refers to conclusions that can be drawn about the existence and nature of God (or the gods) on the basis of evidence and reasons available to any intelligent person without having recourse to an alleged source of divine revelation such as the Bible or the Koran. Invoking philosophical proofs for the existence of God would thus be indicative of the approach taken by natural religion. Revealed religion, by contrast, appeals to supposed truths about the divine that are obtained from a source that is thought to be divinely inspired. Belief in the Trinity or the divinity of Christ would be examples of beliefs held by those who accept revealed religion, in this case Christianity (see Gaskin 1993a, 314).

When Hume refers to and critiques religious morality, he is primarily speaking of morality grounded, whether in whole or in part, in revealed religion and which includes

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[1] While Hume provides an account of the origins of our common moral language, the claim that by it he means actively to replace religious morality is a further interpretive claim. It is not, though, a terribly controversial one. For example, Gaskin observes that, "Hume never explicitly says it [i.e., his secular account of ethics] is superior to and can replace religious morality, but his account makes no reference whatever to divine sanctions or fiats, and the implication is clear" (1993b, xvii). Furthermore, Hume appeals to his experience-based account of ethics as the standard by which he critiques certain injunctions of religious morality (see EPM IX.1, 270, 341-43; NHR XIV, 179-83; D XII, 122-25). (On this point see also Yandell's discussion (1990, 27-30).) The claim that Hume meant to undermine the foundations of religious morality and to erect a secular one in its place will be more fully considered in *I*.

the accompanying forms of religious practice that arise in religious traditions (e.g.,

rituals, spiritual practices, venerations, specific codes of conduct and prohibitions).[2]

When Hume speaks of superstition, it is revealed religion to which he refers.[3] I will

speak more about the dominant ways in which Christian morality has been understood to

be dependent upon revealed religion in *II*. Here it suffices to point out that Hume's

attempt to establish the autonomy of morality from revealed religion would have been

alarming to many Christian readers.

Given, however, that the moral philosophers with whom Hume engaged tended

to be Deists who were also to varying degrees critical of revealed religion, what was

especially controversial about Hume's moral philosophy was that it asserted

independence from natural religion as well. Deists, like Hume, wanted to focus instead

not on the religious accompaniments (rituals, etc.) but on moral practice that was evident

to us through natural means (e.g., reason, moral sense, etc., depending upon the account

given). Nevertheless, most accounts maintained in different ways that God was

necessary to ground and ultimately to motivate morality. Hobbes and Mandeville are

noteworthy figures who rejected both claims, but they also both saw morality as mere

artifice, i.e., as social convention that developed out of enlightened self-interest to

facilitate common life. Thus the prominent "atheist" options on offer were at bottom

versions of moral skepticism, and thus atheism was often seen as a threat to the

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[2] When I speak of religious morality in this chapter, I usually follow Hume in referring to morality informed in some way by revealed religion. If I use religious morality to refer to a moral philosophy that appeals to natural religion, the context should cue the reader into this momentary shift. It is important to hold these two versions of religious morality distinct. As I will later discuss, although Hume thinks that neither revealed nor natural religion is necessary to ground or to motivate morality, he is deeply concerned about the practical effects of revealed religion whereas he seems to think that natural religion can have some social benefit (however much he regards his thoroughly secular account to be superior). See footnote 8.

[3] Gaskin points out that Hume tends to use the phrase "vulgar superstition" to refer to "what on examination turns out to be religion as ordinarily understood in the world" (1993a, 209).

possibility of positive moral vision.[4] Although Hume does maintain, with Mandeville, that some virtues, such as justice and chastity for women, are artificial (i.e., developed through convention),[5] his moral philosophy was unique in that it offers an account of what genuine virtue is and how we are motivated to acquire it without depending upon a transcendent moral source.

As I will discuss in *IV.*, Hume was particularly concerned that morality informed by revealed religion had pernicious effects. Indeed, I believe that undermining "vulgar religion" (and Christianity was the chief target in Hume's context) and what Hume saw as its unnatural vision of life and potential for spawning social factions was one of his enduring philosophical aims. The fact that Hume concludes most of his major works after *A Treatise of Human Nature* with critiques of religious morality attests to the centrality of Hume's concern to subdue the harmful practical consequences of "superstitious" religious belief. His objections to religious morality can be found in Section XI of *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section IX of *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (as well as in the appended essay, "A Dialogue"), Sections X, XIV-XV of *The Natural History of Religion*, and Part XII of *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. The harmful impact of religious beliefs is also a dominant theme in Hume's *History of England*.[6] And although most scholars have regarded the *Treatise of Human Nature* to be largely unconcerned with religion, Paul Russell has

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[4] See David Fate Norton's discussion of Hume's desire to combat the moral skepticism of Hobbes (1982, 150-1).

[5] Michael Gill moreover points out that even with respect to Hume's account of artificial virtues such as justice he crucially differs from Mandeville, who thought that for most people the supposed concern for justice in fact masked self-interest, i.e., was merely counterfeit virtue. Hume, by contrast, maintains that the self-interest that gives rise to justice eventually can, by an associative "progress of sentiments" (THN 3.2.2.25, 321) be transcended so that the just person is genuinely committed to justice, even when it runs "contrary to private interest" (T 3.2.1.11, 309) (2006, 235-40).

[6] See Siebert (1990, Chapter Two) and Herdt (1997, Chapter Five) for excellent discussions of this theme in the *History of England*.

cogently argued that when the historical debates surrounding religion are appreciated and important textual cues are duly noted, it becomes clear that the *Treatise* deeply and systematically aims to undermine religion and to offer a secular moral alternative.[7] (I discuss Russell's work in detail in *I*.) Moreover, Jennifer Herdt convincingly makes the case that the unity of Hume's corpus as a whole only comes into clear focus when we appreciate Hume's dominant concern to subdue the harmful, faction-inducing effects of revealed religion and to provide a secular, non-sectarian account of morality that cuts across religious divides that were hindering the progress of his native Scotland (1997, 10-16). Although Hume seems to have thought that natural religion could have morally beneficial effects,[8] the way in which he argues for the independence of morality from

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[7] Furthermore, there is reason to think that the original draft of the *Treatise* contained more explicit critiques of religious belief and religious morality but that Hume had removed those passages that could overtly offend religious believers in hopes that the work might be more widely received. Evidence for this can be found, for example, in Hume's letter to Henry Home (December 2nd, 1737) where he says, "I am at present castrating my work, that is, cutting off its nobler parts; that is, endeavouring it shall give as little offense as possible" (LDH #7). Hume is perhaps suggesting his essay on miracles which was discussed previously in the letter (and which was later published in the first *Enquiry*) but may be referring to other critiques of religious belief and practice as well. See also Hume's exchanges with Francis Hutcheson regarding Book III ("Of Morals") of the *Treatise* (see the letter written on Sept. 17th, 1739 and Mar. 4th, 1740 in LDH #13 and #36). For further discussions on this point, see Mossner 1978, 654-656; Gay 1968, 404-405; Norton 1986, fn. 23; Wootton 1990, 199. While there does seem to be evidence that Hume's more explicit critiques of religion were extracted before its publication, nevertheless Paul Russell convincingly shows that we are not therefore to conclude that the *Treatise* was not dominantly concerned with religion (2008, 267-278).

[8] Hume does occasionally mention some beneficial consequences of religion. For example, he says "The proper Office of Religion is to reform Men's Lives, to purify their Hearts, to inforce all moral Duties, & to secure Obedience to the Laws & civil Magistrate" (quoted in Mossner 1980, 306). In the context of the full quotation, however, it is important to note that this is a pragmatic, secular conception of the function of religion in the commonwealth, not a conception that many religious believers would hold (Mossner 1978, 658). This general idea is also expressed by Cleanthes (a Deist, a proponent of natural religion) in the *Dialogues* (XII, 122)—though to this Philo replies: 1) that religion as it is commonly found (i.e., vulgar religion) prompts much immoral action (D XII, 123-26) and 2) is relatively superfluous for those philosophers who "stand less in need of such [religious] motives to keep them under the restraint of morals" (D XII, 123-24). Because Hume prudentially does not always express his religious views straightforwardly, it is difficult to know whether and, if so, to what extent Hume would have thought natural religion to be morally helpful. It is nevertheless clear that he does not think that natural religion is needed in order to account for or to motivate morality.

Hume's stance towards morality based in revealed religion, however, seems to be almost wholly critical. Yandell in fact argues that according to Hume the religious motives and duties that religious morality will add to ethics are "inherently negative" (1990, 29). While this unqualified claim may be a bit too strong, Herdt similarly but more cautiously notes that Hume rarely attributes beneficial actions to

even natural religion serves to further discredit the legitimacy of religious morality (again, Christianity would be dominant in his mind) insofar as many religious thinkers use the arguments of natural religion as a support for belief in divine revelation. Hume's attack on both natural and revealed religion and his positive account of morality that renders larger metaphysical questions irrelevant thus hang together as a way to combat the harm of "superstition" and the conceptions of morality that it shapes.

In this chapter I will discuss Hume's epistemological objections to religion (both revealed and natural) that have a particular relevance to Christian morality. I will then present Hume's moral philosophy, distinctive in its time for its thorough-going autonomy from religion.[9] Finally, I will discuss some of Hume's practical or moral objections to religious (and in some ways specifically Christian) morality, which he levels on the basis of his secular ethic of common life. First, however, I want to situate Hume's moral philosophy, his skeptical critiques of religion, and his concerns with religious practice more broadly within his overall philosophical aims. Throughout the discussions of Christian morality I will, when necessary, distinguish between divine command theory (embraced by the hyper-Augustinian Protestant Reformers) and natural law theory (articulated most thoroughly and influentially by Aquinas, who represents Christian humanism). Showing the different ways in which Hume's critiques apply to these two forms will further set the context for appreciating and critically engaging

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religious motivation or expresses much esteem for religious characters. She points out, for example, that even in his discussion of the admirable Thomas More, "Hume does not…allow that More's religious dedication might be the source of his sustained gentleness and joy, but suggests that these must be basic personality traits which not even his religion could obliterate" (1997, 214).

[9] As I say above and discuss further in *I.*, Hobbes and Mandeville also provide a secular account of ethics, but Hume's is unique from theirs insofar as Hume argues that most virtues are natural (and real), not artificial (rooted in convention). See Gill (2006, 226-40), Russell (2008, 239-63), Herdt (2008, 308-12), and Norton (2006, 149-62) for helpful discussions.

Hume's critique of humility and of religiously-informed accounts of ethics in the third and sixth chapters.

I. Skepticism, Naturalism, and Religion in Hume's Philosophy

Before addressing Hume's views of morality and religion, I want to look first at his two dominant philosophical approaches (skepticism and naturalism), their problematic relationship to each other, and their relationship to his views on religion. Doing so is important for setting up the central themes of the dissertation because these issues pertain to Hume's general view of the relationship between religion and human flourishing as well as to why he seeks to direct our attention away from larger metaphysical or what I will call "cosmic" questions. Furthermore, these issues have a bearing upon the specific topics of this chapter, namely, how to interpret the nature of Hume's skeptical critiques of religion that are relevant to Christian morality as well as how to understand his own naturalistic account of ethics.[10]

Hume employs skepticism—what he calls 'extreme' or 'Pyrrhonian' skepticism—primarily in Book I of the *Treatise* and in his reworking of Book I in the first *Enquiry*.[11] Hume's skeptical arguments in the first two works call into question the

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[10] These issues surrounding Hume's skepticism and naturalism are germane to the themes in this chapter insofar as I seek to understand the character of and relationship between 1) Hume's epistemological critiques of religion that are relevant to Christian morality (see *II.*), which come out of Hume's skeptical project and 2) Hume's secular account of morality (see *III.*), which is a facet of Hume's naturalism. For example, are Hume's skeptical critiques pertaining to Christian morality meant to clear the way for his secular morality, with the latter intended to replace the former? Or are his epistemological critiques of religion primarily one piece of his skeptical project, motivated largely by a philosophical concern to get clear on the limits of human reason independent of religious concerns? Is Hume's secular morality itself a minimalist description of our language of praise and blame—a very modest naturalistic account strongly restrained by skepticism—or it is meant to be a more robust, normative ethic that emerges when greater interpretative stress is placed on the constructive, naturalistic elements of Hume's work? Finally, to what extent, if any, do Hume's concerns with the harms caused by religion (the topic of *IV.*) play a role in understanding his skeptical critiques of religion and his naturalistic account of morality?

[11] See Hume's "My Own Life," where he recounts that the content his first and second *Enquiry* were parts of the *Treatise* that he "cast anew" (ESY xxxv).

very foundations of human knowledge by challenging our rational justification for such

fundamental beliefs as the existence of the external world, causality, the self, etc. and

aim to show the limits of human reason. In Hume's naturalistic approach to philosophy,

as primarily found in Book II and III of the *Treatise*, in the second *Enquiry* (a reworking

primarily of Book III), and in the *Natural History*, he seeks to apply the experimental

method of Newton to human nature and so to construct a positive body of knowledge

grounded in common life.

A vexing question for Hume scholars has been how to reconcile these two sides

of his thought. Since Hume's skepticism undercuts all of our most basic commonsense

beliefs about the world, it is difficult to see how his naturalistic projects can be

philosophically justified. Paul Russell states the problem particularly well when he says,

"Hume 'the skeptic' appears to saw off the branch that Hume 'the Newton of the moral

sciences' is sitting on" (2008, 268). While Hume is clearly committed both to skepticism

and naturalism, scholarship is deeply divided over how to understand the extent and

coherence of these commitments and thus to understand the character of Hume's work as

a whole.[12]

Hume's explanation as to why he moves from extreme skepticism to naturalism

is found in his *Treatise* 1.4.7 and in XII of the first *Enquiry*. Hume maintains that

although extreme skeptical arguments cannot be rationally defeated (T 1.4.7.9, 175; see

also EHU XII.2, 160), we do not remain in a state of universal doubt for two reasons.

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[12] For some scholars who emphasize Hume's skeptical commitments, see Leslie Stephen 1962; Robert Fogelin 1985. For some scholars that emphasize Hume's naturalistic commitments, see Norman Kemp Smith 1941; Barry Stroud 1977; Annette Baier 1991; Donald Livingston 1990. For a scholar who denies that the skeptical and naturalistic aims of the *Treatise* are unified, see David Fate Norton 1982. For a helpful survey of some of the dominant interpretive strategies for dealing with Hume's skepticism and naturalism and for the difficulties that arise for each interpretation, see Broughton's "Hume's Naturalism and His Skepticism" (2008, 432-36).

First, the conclusions of Pyrrhonism are unlivable; they cannot have any persistent or lasting influence on the mind. Human nature draws even the most determined skeptic back to the common affairs of ordinary life where she must believe and act among other humans (see EHU XII.2, 159-60).[13] Second, even *if* it were possible to sustain Pyrrhonism (which it is not), it would not be beneficial to do so (EHU XII.2, 159-60; T 1.4.7.10, 175).

Nevertheless, Hume maintains that Pyrrhonism is importantly instructive for two reasons. First, it curbs our natural tendency to be dogmatic in all our opinions (EHU XII.3, 161; see also T 1.4.7.15, 178). Second, it restrains the tendency of our imagination to run unbridled to whatever is remote, extraordinary, and sublime (EHU XII.3, 162), be it to religious superstition or to the abstruse and exalted metaphysical claims of ambitious philosophers (T 1.4.7.13, 176). (Hume regards religious superstition as significantly more problematic than speculative metaphysics, however, since he maintains that "the errors of religion are dangerous [whereas] those in philosophy only ridiculous" (T 1.4.7.13, 177).[14]) Pyrrhonism teaches us instead to limit "our enquiries to such subjects as are best adapted to the narrow capacity of human understanding" (EHU XII.3, 162)—i.e., to restrict our philosophical investigations to common life and to

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[13] See where Hume says, "Nature is always too strong for principle. And though a Pyrrhonian may throw himself or others into a momentary amazement and confusion by his profound reasonings; the first and most trivial event in life will put to flight all his doubts and scruples, and leave him the same, in every point of action and speculation, with the philosophers of every other sect, or with those who never concerned themselves in any philosophical researches" (EHU 12.23, 160).

[14] This view is repeated in "A Dialogue" wherein Hume characterizes the life of Pascal (whose passions are formed by religious superstition) and Diogenes (whose passions are informed by his "extravagant" philosophical views). While Hume seems to present both as "depart[ing] from the maxims of common reasons, and affect[ing] these *artificial* lives" (EPM 343), Hume clearly represents Pascal's perspective as more seriously distorted and harmful.

refrain from speculating beyond this domain (EHU XII.3, 162).[15] Hume thus advocates a

"more *mitigated* scepticism or *academical* philosophy" (EHU XII.3, 161), one that takes

to heart these lessons by avoiding dogmatism and flights of fancy but addresses the

subjects that necessarily concern us when the "current of nature" (T 1.4.7.12, 175) calls

us back from extreme skepticism to common life—subjects such as morality, politics, art

criticism, the sciences, etc. (EHU XII.3, 163-65; see T 1.4.7.12, 176). It is from this

standpoint of mitigated skepticism that Hume undertakes his project of providing a

"science of man" (T 1.4.7.14-15, 177-78).

This, then, is generally how Hume links the skeptical and naturalistic sides of his

work. It does not, however, clearly resolve the tensions between them. We are still left to

wonder about the extent to which Hume's naturalism can be philosophically justified,

about the extent of his commitments to his skeptical and naturalistic enterprises, and

about which side of his thought should receive greater emphasis. Among Hume scholars,

Paul Russell's proposed solution to this puzzle stands out as an especially important

work with which to engage in light of the central topics of this dissertation, since he

uniquely gives thorough and sustained attention not only to the nature of and relationship

between Hume's skepticism and naturalism, but also to the role that Hume's irreligious

aims play in understanding their relationship.[16] Russell cogently argues that Hume's

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[15] When our judgments are tempered by Pyrrhonism, they "[avoid] all distant and high enquiries, [confine themselves] to common life, and to such subjects as fall under daily practice and experience; leaving the more sublime topics to the embellishment of poets and orators, or to the arts of priests and politicians" (EHU XII.3, 162).

[16] Russell favors the label "irreligious" to that of "agnostic" or "religious skeptic" because the latter two labels "fail to identify properly and highlight the wholly *hostile* and *critical* character of Hume's general attitude toward religious doctrine and dogma" (2008, 284). Moreover, the latter two labels could mistakenly suggest that Hume's thinks that the proper response to all religious judgments is merely to suspend judgment, when in fact he seems to think that thicker conceptions of theism (held, for example, by Christians) are highly doubtful and probably false (2008, 284).

anti-religious goals not only pervade the *Treatise* (which scholars had previously

regarded as largely unconcerned with religion).[17] Moreover, he contends that they are

the key to reconciling and unifying the skeptical and naturalistic aspects of the *Treatise*,

as well as the varying themes in his corpus as a whole. In what follows I present

Russell's reasons for his view and this will serve as a springboard for my assessment of

Hume's skepticism and naturalism in relation to issues pertaining to religion and

morality in this chapter and throughout the dissertation.

Russell argues, first, that appreciating Hume's irreligious aims clarifies the way

in which the skeptical and naturalistic components of Hume's work are *deeply related*.

He writes that

> in order to clear the ground to build the edifice of secular morality [which is the
> main task of Hume's naturalism], Hume had to undertake a systematic skeptical
> attack on those theological doctrines and principles that threatened such a
> project. The varied and seemingly unrelated skeptical arguments Hume advances
> in the *Treatise* are in fact held together by his overarching concern to discredit
> and refute Christian metaphysics and morals. … (2008, 269)

It is worth mentioning that although there is widespread scholarly consensus that Hume was hostile to religion, a few scholars read Hume as being more favorable to religion (at least to natural religion). Charles Hendel (1925), for example, thinks that Hume's position on religion is similar to that of Berkeley, Butler, and "Cleanthes" from the *Dialogues*. See also Timothy Yoder's 2008 arguments for Hume's 'amoral theism.' I do not think, however, that these offer the most natural interpretation of Hume's texts as a whole, especially once Hume's anti-religious sentiments in his letters and as expressed in his *History of England* are taken into consideration.

[17] Russell shows that once we appreciate the *Treatise* in its historical context, we see that it is deeply an irreligious work, to which the responses of his contemporaries attest (see chapter two for Russell's discussion of the early reception of the *Treatise*). Here I name just some of the observations that Russell lays out with great care. First, there are important parallels between Hobbes's work (one of the notorious "atheists" of the modern period) and Hume's structure and content of the *Treatise*, which would signal to readers that Hume shares Hobbes's aim "to develop a secular, scientific account of the foundation of the moral and social life" (2008, 269). Second, if we view Hume's arguments in Book I in light of the central debates between theist philosophers (particularly Samuel Clarke) and atheistic "freethinkers" of the period, we will see that even Hume's arguments apparently unrelated to religion in fact are part of a thorough and systematic attack on the positions fundamental to many theistic commitments (Russell discusses in detail Hume's arguments regarding empiricism and the idea of God, space, induction, matter, the human soul, freedom and necessity, and the external world). Third, by recasting some of the well-known debates in moral philosophy in light of how they stand in relation to religion, Russell shows how blaring and controversial the absence of God in Hume's moral philosophy would have been for his readers. Russell indeed offers a powerful battery of arguments that, I think, leaves little room for doubting that the *Treatise* is a work of irreligion.

Indeed, Hume's central goal in his skeptical enterprise, Russell shows, was to contest "the most current and influential arguments presented by various 'religious philosophers' who sought to prove (demonstratively) the fundamental articles of the Christian religion" (2008, 270). Even more fundamentally, Hume sought to render religion philosophically irrelevant, for what remains after human nature pulls us out of Pyrrhonism back to ordinary life is a philosophy that has been shorn of its orientation to ultimate, religiously-related questions and is poised instead to take up the project of providing a (Hobbist-inspired) "science of man." Because a straightforward reading of the *Treatise* leaves one mystified as to why Hume would initiate his project to provide a science of man with a rigorous skepticism that would seem to destroy such aspirations, Russell argues that the coherence of Hume's project in the *Treatise* (and in the skeptical and naturalistic aspects of his later work) only becomes fully intelligible when viewed in light of Hume's irreligious concerns. Russell thereby shows, convincingly I think, that appreciating the way in which Hume's irreligion is at work in the *Treatise* provides an *interpretive* solution to the apparent mismatch between the skeptical and naturalistic components.

Russell less convincingly contends, however, that his irreligious interpretation of the *Treatise* provides a *philosophical* solution to the difficulties posed by Hume's attempt to wed skepticism and naturalism (2008, 270). His argument comes in two parts. First, he argues that the two sides of Hume's thought cannot be adequately characterized or understood apart from the overarching irreligious reading, nor can Hume's philosophical motivations and commitments be appropriately grasped (2008, 271). Hume's skepticism is not fully appreciated unless we see that by it he attempts to

undermine philosophical grounds for religious belief and morals,[18] and Hume's

naturalism is not rightly appreciated unless we see that it is meant to offer an intellectual

and practical secular alternative to a religious worldview (2008, 269-70). In this way, the

Treatise offers a complete system of irreligion or secular philosophy, and is unique

among Hume's works for doing so (2008, 275). While, however, I agree that Hume's

irreligious aims are necessary for making sense of his project as a whole and for seeing

how these two elements fit together in Hume's thought, this appears to be yet another

interpretative rather than *philosophical* solution to the tension inherent between

advocating skepticism and embracing naturalism. Furthermore, it seems that if Hume's

naturalism is to be philosophically justified over and against his skepticism, it must be

able to be understood independently of his irreligious motivations. Thus, although I am

persuaded by Russell's account of how Hume's irreligion helps to explain what he was

doing and why he was doing it, Hume's irreligion, I think, is not and cannot be sufficient

for explaining why his skepticism does not pull the rug out from under his naturalism.

     Russell's second component of his argument for the philosophical solution to the

riddle rests in pointing to the "*dynamic* nature of Hume's skeptical commitments" (2008,

270). Russell thinks that interpretive problems arise when scholars read the options as

being static, for then we are asked to decide where Hume's commitments most lie, with

skepticism (where naturalism is undermined) or naturalism (where skepticism seems not

to be taken seriously). Russell emphasizes, however, that the skeptical and naturalistic

sides of Hume's work inseparably hang together. The extreme skeptic needs a kind of

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[18] Russell does make clear that Hume's skepticism is subject-neutral and undermines the rational basis for most of our beliefs. It is not insignificant, however, that most of our commonsense beliefs are seen as legitimate grounds for inquiry into human life (albeit understood less dogmatically) when the draw of nature carries us out of our skeptical doubts whereas religious beliefs with any significant content remain unjustified insofar as they are seen as too remote for our limited reason.

skeptically-informed naturalism, since even the most extravagant skeptic cannot fully live according to, nor be benefitted by, universal doubt. Likewise, an adequate naturalism needs skepticism in order to proceed with due caution (especially insofar as it helps to remind us of the weakness of human reason and the futility of speculating beyond the bounds of common life).

Russell rightly notes, however, that this does not suffice as a response to those who nevertheless object that Pyrrhonism really does undermine the foundations of Hume's naturalism and that the naturalness and usefulness of succumbing to the current of nature does not *philosophically justify* naturalism (2008, 221). To deal with this, Russell appeals to Hume's comment that "a true skeptic will be diffident of his philosophical doubts, as well as of his philosophical conviction" (T 1.4.7.14, 177; Russell 2008, 221, 271), suggesting that for Hume, if extreme skepticism is to be consistent, it must turn in on itself and doubt its very conclusions. Russell thus indicates that by Hume's account (and Russell states no objection to this notion) when Pyrrhonism itself comes under philosophical doubt it is not only the pull of nature that returns us to common life "but also the force of skeptical reflection itself" (2008, 221). Russell concludes therefore that it

> is within this *philosophical dynamic* that Hume undertakes to pursue his (Hobbist) project of a "science of man." From this perspective, there is no conflict between the principles of the "true skeptic" and the aims of the "science of man." (2008, 221-22)

Russell's claim is, thus, that Hume has philosophical justification for his naturalistic project.[19]

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[19] Regardless of whether one finds this to be a satisfactory reconciliation of Hume's skepticism and naturalism—and even if it is, more needs to be said about it from both Hume and Russell—it is worth noting that although Russell claims that his irreligious interpretation of Hume solves the central

In a moment I will take issue with Russell's treatment of the philosophical

tension in Hume's work, as it has important implications for some of the larger topics I

raise in this dissertation. At this juncture, however, I first want to discuss the ways in

which Russell's convincing interpretive account of how Hume's irreligious aims

illuminate the relationship between his skepticism and naturalism inform how I read

Hume's stance toward religious and specifically Christian morality in this chapter. In

particular, given Russell's thorough arguments that Hume's skeptical project was

carefully crafted so as to undermine the conclusions of leading defenders of Christianity

(most especially Samuel Clarke),[20] I think it is quite unlikely that Hume's skeptical

critiques of those positions pertinent to Christian morality (which I later discuss in *II*.)

were carried out merely to discern the limits of human knowledge and not also to topple

the conceptual pillars upon which Christian morality is understood and defended.

As already mentioned, we know from the concluding sections in the second

Enquiry (XI), the *Natural History* (X, XIV-XV), and the *Dialogues* (XII) that Hume

regarded religious morality (and Christian morality would have been particularly in his

mind) to be damaging in various ways, and thus we know that he has practical

motivation for attacking its foundations. (I discuss some of the ways in which Hume sees

religious morality to be harmful in *IV*.) Indeed, it is only a deep conviction that religion

causes harm—and that a primary way it does so is by shaping our conceptions of moral

practice—that can make sense of why Hume would be so concerned throughout his work

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philosophical problem that is posed by Hume's skepticism and naturalism, Hume's irreligion plays no role in Russell's proposed solution to it.

[20] Hume's irreligious aims were apparent to his close philosophical successors as well as to his contemporaries. For example, in the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant says of Hume: "[H]e desired, as is well known, nothing more than that a merely subjectively necessary concept of cause, i.e. habit, be assumed in place of all objective meaning of necessity in the causal concept; he did this in order to deny to reason any judgment concerning God, freedom, and immortality; and he knew very well how to draw conclusions with complete cogency when once the principles were conceded" (5.13, 146-47).

to discredit it and why it is more his target than those abstruse metaphysical systems that equally come under his skeptical attack (see T 1.4.7.13, 177). Moreover, as I will argue, there are specific Christian doctrines that were held to have moral implications (namely, eternal life, which I discuss in this chapter, and original sin and dependency on grace, which I briefly reference in the next) that Hume tacitly critiques because of their harmful effects on the individual's psyche or society at large. When Hume's concerns about the corrupting effects of religious, and indeed specifically Christian, morality are appreciated, it seems most likely that Hume's skeptical arguments, which bear relevance to Christian morality, were made in part to contribute to the loosening of its grip on Western culture.

Additionally, I, with Russell, read Hume's ethics as primarily a positive, naturalistic account of morality, rather than largely expressing skepticism with respect to morality. Russell points out that two of the most prominent "atheist" moral philosophers, Hobbes and Mandeville, both defend a skeptical account of morality, regarding moral distinctions to be primarily artificial—i.e., brought about through social convention. Both also accept a thoroughly negative view of human nature, regarding humans as fundamentally selfish and ultimately motivated to follow the conventional moral norms endorsed by society out of enlightened self-interest or desire for praise (Russell 2008, 242, 251; see also Herdt 1997, 27).[21] For them, then, there is no moral reality beyond what we have contrived in order to live together, nor is there genuine pursuit of (what we call) virtue for its own sake. Many thinkers in Hume's day thought atheism or irreligion

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[21] It is worth noting that both hold secular versions of hyper-Augustinianism insofar as they regard human nature to be fundamentally egoistic (akin to the hyper-Augustinian view that humans are thoroughly corrupt) and regard human "virtue" to be motivated by nothing other than self-interest (akin to the hyper-Augustinian interpretation of un-graced human action).

entailed this sort of moral skepticism (Russell 2008, 244, 251),[22] and indeed some of

Hume's contemporaries accused him of holding such a view (see LG, 18).[23]

While Hume certainly holds that some virtues were artificial (e.g., justice and

chastity), he also maintains, in contrast to Hobbes and Mandeville, that most virtues are

natural and, correspondingly, that there is a real not merely artificial distinction between

vice and virtue. Unlike Hobbes and Mandeville, Hume also argues that in addition to

being naturally selfish, humans are also sympathetic by nature and that sympathy cannot

be reduced to self-interest. Accordingly, Hume's secular ethic allows for the possibility

of genuine virtue (and, what is more, genuine virtue among atheists), even while

remaining agnostic with respect to the ultimate questions, in a way that the two most

prominent secular moral theorists in this period do not.

Now, although Hume is not a moral skeptic in the sense that Hobbes and

Mandeville were, it still needs to be asked whether Hume was some type of moral

skeptic by making moral distinctions a matter of feeling and perhaps therefore of

subjective states.[24] This question will be taken up to some degree in Chapter Five.

Regardless, however, of the metaethical status of Hume's moral philosophy and whether

it is best characterized as skeptical of morality (at least as it was traditionally

understood), Hume treats his naturalistic ethic as a positive and central development of

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[22] For instance, see Clarke's *Discourse* in which he argues that the attempt to make morality autonomous from religion ends up leading to a skepticism towards ethics and a pessimistic view of human nature (Russell 251).

[23] Hume was specifically charged with "sapping the foundations of morality, by denying the natural and essential difference betwixt right and wrong, good and evil, justice and injustice; making the difference only artificial, and to arise from human conventions and compacts" (LG, 18).

[24] Hume's contemporary and early critic Thomas Reid interprets him in this way in (see chapter 5 of Essay 5 in *Active Powers of the Human Mind*). He claims that for Hume moral approbation "is not an Act of the Judgment, which, like all acts of judgment, must be true or false, it is only a certain Feeling, which, from the constitution of human nature, arises upon contemplating certain characters, or qualities of mind, coolly and impartially" (2:651).

his Newtonian project and sees it as a sufficient account of the moral life.[25] Moreover he regards it to be not only epistemologically but also morally superior to accounts of religious morality, as I show in *II.* and *IV.* This suggests that Hume was actively attempting to replace religious morality with a secular one, especially when viewed in light Russell's impressive series of arguments that point towards Hume's irreligious intent as a whole.

Although in this chapter and throughout this dissertation I endorse Russell's interpretation of Hume as seeking to undermine religious morality and to offer a secular morality in its place, this interpretation is nevertheless not essential to the overall arguments I want to make regarding religion and human flourishing. Regardless of whether Hume pointedly attempted to dethrone Christian morality with his skeptical arguments and whether he meant for his secular ethic to be more robust than a mere descriptive account of our moral language, the following uncontroversial claims suffice for my purposes: 1) Hume makes religion conspicuously absent from his moral philosophy and unnecessary to account for morality, and 2) he clearly sees (revealed) religion as largely hindering rather than contributing to moral development as well as social concord (a point I will discuss in *IV.*).

However much Russell's irreligious interpretation has shaped my view of Hume's skeptical and naturalistic aims with respect to religious and secular ethics, the fact that I am less convinced by his account of how it resolves the *philosophical* tension

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[25] Gill argues that while many have worried that Hume's moral philosophy actually undermines morality, he thinks that this is due to our attachment to old conceptions of 'objective' morality rather than accepting Hume's "Copernican revolution," which roots morality in human nature itself (2006, 265-69). See especially his important and lengthy footnotes #6 on pp. 333-35 and #9 on p. 337-39. I will argue in Chapters Five and Six that, like Gill, I think accepting Hume's version of sentimentalism would not likely spark a dramatic change in our conduct, but, unlike Gill, I think that the more subtle differences in our moral reflection and behavior are significant and can have larger social and cultural ramifications over time.

between these two sides of his work leads me to be critical, in a way that Russell is not, of Hume's claim that the mitigated skeptic "will never be tempted to go beyond common life" (ECU XII.3, 162).[26] And this, too, has implications for how I understand Hume's secular account of ethics, his conception of human flourishing, and his critique of Christian morality. It is thus to the philosophical issue that I now turn.

As we saw, to bring coherence to Hume's two approaches, Russell picks up on Hume's remark that the true skeptic must doubt his own conclusions, and he claims that Hume, therefore, has intellectual (and not just practical) grounds for embracing the mitigated skepticism of common life and for basing a science of human nature upon it (2008, 221-22). It is not sufficient, however, for Hume to assert that skepticism itself must be doubted without offering clear philosophical grounds for such doubt, particularly if it is meant to lend credibility to his migration to naturalism. Thus, we should expect that Russell, who is attempting to defend the philosophical coherence of Hume's work, should fill out what Hume could have said as a reason for doubting the skeptical enterprise and then assess whether it could convincingly justify his turn to naturalism. Since Russell does not do this, I will thus attempt to do so in his stead.

What Hume could have said, and what he seems to suggest in the context of his claim about the true skeptic, is that the very strength of our commonsense beliefs to

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[26] Despite this claim, when discussing the subjects permitted from within mitigated skepticism Hume does say that "Divinity or Theology, as it proves the existence of a Deity, and the immortality of souls…has a foundation in *reason*, so far as it is supported by experience. But its best and most solid foundation is *faith* and divine revelation" (EHU XII.3, 165). He had argued earlier, however, that reason and experience do not support belief in a benevolent, wise creator (EHU XI) or the immortality of souls (an implication of T 1.4.5, 152-64; see also ESY 590-8). He also argues in the *Natural History*, however, that it is not reason but other non-rational propensities of human nature such as fear of unknown causes that prompts religious belief (at least since the development of Western thought has made religious belief no longer credible). Finally, his ironic remark about faith in "Of Miracles" suggests that a foundation in faith is really no just foundation (EHU X.2, 129-30; I discuss this passage in *II.*). In other words, his nod to theology here is an insignificant one.

which we are naturally bound to return in common life counts as a significant *reason* for

doubting Pyrrhonist conclusions. The view, when considering a specific skeptical

conclusion, could go something like this: although we can doubt, for example, the

existence of the external world, the force of my belief in its existence—indeed, the fact

that I cannot live as though I am a mere conscious flow of perceptions that fail to

correspond to anything—is a point in favor of the probability that my perceptions do in

fact tell me something about the world. In other words, even if *reason itself* cannot tell

us whether the external world exists, it is *reasonable* to trust our basic beliefs on this

score. While skeptical arguments remove the possibility of judging it to be certainly true

that the external world exists, it is still possible to judge that it is very probably true, and,

in any case, more likely to be true than the skeptical alternative.

This sort of explanation as to why it is epistemologically justifiable to embark on

a naturalistic project implies that it is not certainty beyond any possible doubt (i.e., the

ability to satisfy the skeptic) that is necessary for a claim to be philosophically justified.

It implies, rather, that philosophical justification can be secured by a more modest quest

for an account that best makes sense of our experience, one that takes into consideration

the counter-arguments and does not admit greater certainty than the conclusion allows.[27]

Now it seems to me that *if* Hume sees those beliefs to which nature bids us return as

reasonable to accept (with awareness that certainty cannot be admitted), then it also

seems to be a plausible way to resolve the skeptical and naturalistic aims of his work:

skepticism succeeds in removing dogmatism from our commonsense beliefs, but it does

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[27] Broughton also notes that Hume may have other grounds for justification than defeating the
skeptic. She points out that in Book I of the *Treatise* he seems to see causal beliefs as justified if they are
clear and consistent, and he implicitly employs this standard of justification in his science of man (2008,
429-30).

not succeed in undercutting them, since it is reasonable to suppose that there is likely

credibility to our most persistent patterns of experience. (Indeed, Hume reasonably

assumes that our persistent patterns of experience form the standard of credibility from

within the standpoint of mitigated skepticism. For one example, see his argument in "Of

Miracles," which will be discussed in *II*.).[28]

If Hume's naturalism can be justified in this way, however, it is important to ask

whether his manner of largely excluding religious questions from the philosophy of

common life is also justified.[29] The dominant way in which Hume does so is by pointing

out that religious conclusions are more removed from and more uncertain than beliefs

pertaining to our sense experience (ECU XII.3, 162).[30] However, it would seem that this

point is not sufficient to allow Hume to claim that the mitigated skeptic "will never be

tempted to go beyond common life"; it only suffices to make us less epistemologically

confident in our religious conclusions than we can be in our judgments based on our

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[28] Broughton argues, however, that the key problem Hume's skeptical conclusions force him to face is not how to justify commonsense beliefs in light of skeptical counter-possibilities; rather, his skeptical arguments point to inconsistencies in our beliefs about causality and the existence of the external world such that both beliefs cannot be rationally accepted together (2008, 430-31). If Broughton is correct, then this would undercut the reasonability of accepting both our natural belief in causality and the external world (both of which Hume accepts in his naturalism). Accordingly, I do not see a route by which Hume's skepticism and naturalism can be satisfactorily reconciled—unless, like Baier, we read Hume's skeptical puzzles as pseudo-problems that result from treating ourselves as solipsistic, disembodied thinkers and instead give epistemic priority to those natural beliefs to which we inevitably return as embodied, social beings (1991, 138-42). (Baier's interpretation, however, is open to the charge that it fails to give due place to Hume's skepticism.) In any case, given that Hume's naturalism, whether justified or not, does seem to proceed in the manner I suggested above—i.e., by assuming greater reliability of our natural beliefs grounded in our most persistent patterns of experience—the question that predominantly interests me is whether Hume can, on these grounds, consistently justify his claim that inquiry that takes us beyond common life is a "temptation" (EPU XII.3, 162) to be avoided. I take up this issue above.

[29] It may be countered that this just is what naturalism is and does. Naturalism, however, need not be construed in a way that makes it opposed to "super-naturalism." Aristotle and Aquinas, for example, take a sort of naturalistic approach to questions of human nature and the world, but see this as offering data for considering larger metaphysical and theological questions. For some contemporary approaches to a more expansive naturalism, see Fiona Ellis 2014 and John Cottingham 2012.

[30] See, for example, Hume's letter to Gilbert Elliot of Minto, March 10, 1751, where he writes, "I cou'd wish that Cleanthes' Argument [from design] could be so analys'd, as to be render'd quite formal & regular. The Propensity of the Mind toward it, unless that Propensity were as strong & universal as that to believe in our Senses & Experience, will still, I am afraid, be esteem'd a suspicious Foundation" (LDH #72, 155).

most persistent patterns of sense experience. It still is open to argument whether or not

religious conclusions can provide a best account of our experience, even while

acknowledging that such conclusions are eminently doubtable.[31]

Another way, however, in which Hume perhaps removes religion from his

mitigated skepticism of common life is by suggesting that the "current of nature," which

returns us to the common life from which his naturalism is built, does not include the

tendency toward religious belief. This is an interesting move on Hume's part, not only

because religious belief was so widespread in Hume's lifetime, and all of human history

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[31] In a way I am putting forward Cleanthes' challenge to Philo's mitigated skepticism (which follows Hume's account of mitigated skepticism in the *Treatise* and the second *Enquiry* (see Russell's textual comparisons (2008, 210-13)). Cleanthes says,

> These [mitigated] sceptics, therefore, are obliged, in every question, to consider each particular evidence apart, and proportion their assent to the precise degree of evidence which occurs. This is their practice in all natural, mathematical, moral, and political science. And why not the same, I ask, in the theological and religious? Why must conclusions of this nature be alone rejected on the general presumption of the insufficiency of human reason, without any particular discussion of the evidence? (D 39)

Interestingly and unfortunately, Philo does not seem to reply directly to this challenge. This is in part because Cleanthes goes on to maintain that the "arguments employed in all [sciences], if just, are of a similar nature, and *contain the same force and evidence*. Or if there be any difference among them, *the advantage lies entirely on the side of theology and natural religion*" (D 39-40, emphasis mine). Philo's arguments thus proceed to target Cleanthes' over-confidence in the kind of certainty we can have with respect to religious matters, particularly with regard to the design argument. Philo fails, however, to respond to Cleanthes' previous suggestion that we can engage in serious religious inquiry so long as our conclusions are proportioned to the evidence (and hence, in light of Philo's arguments, would be much weaker than Cleanthes supposes). This is an important point for the way that the arguments unfold in the *Dialogues*. Hume does not cast the debate in "best account" terms. That is, Philo is not arguing primarily that any of his skeptical alternatives to the design argument that Cleanthes endorses makes *better* sense of the totality of human experience than does an account from design. The crux of Philo's arguments is, rather, that we just cannot know much at all about religious matters and that Cleanthes' confidence is disproportionate to the evidence. But there is still much to be discussed as to whether some religious picture makes better sense of certain phenomena than do other cosmic pictures and whether our cosmic picture makes a significant difference (positively as well as negatively) to how we understand and engage in common life.

That said, despite the fact that the mitigated skeptic seeks to remain in the confines of common life (as Hume understands it), Hume of course does explicitly engage in religious inquiry (EHU X, XI; D; NHR). Moreover he does argue, sometimes implicitly, that religious conclusions made by any religious tradition (Christianity being the primary religion in question) do not make the best sense of our experience. This serves to give further credence to his view that we should not waste much philosophical energy on these sorts of questions. Arguing that a religious conclusion does in fact make better sense of our experience would require engaging with Hume at this level, as many in contemporary philosophy of religion do. What concerns me here, though, is Hume's more fundamental suggestion that religious inquiry primarily lies outside the scope of mitigated skepticism (and hence legitimate inquiry).

prior to it, nor only because cosmic questions arise for us not just as we engage in academic reflection but as we engage in the affairs of common life, but perhaps especially because Hume himself maintains that religious belief is rooted in our human nature. We thus need to consider how Hume would explain why the pull of human nature does not also return us to the religious beliefs of which we were skeptical just as it returns us to our other commonsense beliefs of which we were also skeptical. Additionally, we need to consider why Hume does not seem to think that a philosophy grounded in common life should take the prevalence of religion in human life as a suggestion that there might be a transcendent reference to which our religious impulses point, somewhat akin to his suggestion that the prevalence of certain patterns of experience render it is reasonable to believe in those conclusions founded upon them.

There are three ways in which Hume seems to sift religion out in the process of returning from Pyrrhonism to common life. First, what is included in the pull of nature (as is relevant to his naturalism rooted in common life) is modeled on Hume's account of experience as atomistic sense experience. Belief in a non-physical divine being or beings is necessarily severed from experience understood in this way. On Hume's account, we can never have an experience of God, only a flow of sensations from which we can make religious inferences but which are always more explicable by psychological and sociological means (see NHR). Second, although Hume thinks that religious belief has its origins in human nature itself, he maintains that it is founded on propensities that are weaker than (and secondary to) the propensities to believe in sensory experience (see NHR XII, 172).[32] Hume could thereby attempt to justify removing religion from

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[32] Yandell has a very helpful discussion of the various propensities that Hume discusses in the *Natural History* to account for religious belief. Among them are the propensities to believe in an invisible

common life by maintaining that a naturalism checked by mitigated skepticism can rest only on those most tenacious beliefs about which no one can sustain doubt, and on this ground religious belief is excluded. Third, Hume seems also to justify holding that common life is a sphere from which religion can be extracted by assuming, in way that he later attempts to vindicate through his naturalistic project, that the answers to cosmic questions are largely irrelevant to common life (and moreover that religious beliefs, in fact, are often destructive).

Although there is much plausibility in all three of these moves, they are not, I think, sufficient to show that cosmic questions should be largely discounted from within the mitigated skepticism of common life. All of them—whether he has adequately characterized the nature of experience (and whether the religious implications of his account hold),[33] whether he has adequately understood the way in which the religious impulse is rooted in human nature,[34] and whether certain answers to cosmic questions are in fact largely irrelevant to human flourishing—leave room for serious debate.

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and intelligent power, to anthropomorphize, to adulation, to fluctuate from idolatry to theism and back again, etc. (1990, 10-16). See also Russell's discussion of Hume's view that religious principles are secondary rather than original to human nature (2008, 291).

[33] We might think of Edmund Husserl who gives a very different account of experience by contending that adequate attention to the phenomena reveals that experience includes more than just sensation. This different conception of experience enabled some of his followers (e.g., Max Scheler, Edith Stein, Dietrich von Hildebrand, and others) to reflect philosophically upon religious experience in a non-reductive manner. William James is another person who begins with a different conception of experience, which enables him to be more open to religious questions.

[34] Charles Taylor, for example, roots our religious nature in being 'strong evaluators,' i.e., beings who inevitably make qualitative distinctions of worth (see 1985 and 1898, 4, 14, 20). Indeed, I think that though we can be skeptical of our strong evaluations, the current of nature pulls us back not only to certain natural sense beliefs but also to strongly evaluative ones. (The notion of strong evaluation is very important, and I will take it up in Chapters Four, Five, and Six.) If Taylor is correct, and I think he is, then although Hume rightly notes that some (and indeed many, as is now historically clear) can live without religion, he misses the fact that we do not seem to be able to live without making strong evaluations. (See Yandell (1990, 23-25) and Russell (2008, 290-300) for helpful discussions on how Hume can see religion as rooted in human nature but nevertheless not regard religious belief to be inevitable.) Once this is admitted, the question arises as to which cosmic pictures are best able to support and make sense of our strong evaluations. I argue in Chapter Five that Hume smuggles in certain crucial strong evaluative claims that his secular moral philosophy cannot adequately justify.

Indeed the final claim will be centrally explored and in certain ways contested in this dissertation.[35]

In sum then, Russell, who claims that the philosophical tension in Hume's work is resolved by appreciating his irreligion, seems also to think that Hume is justified in largely excluding religious questions from the sphere of legitimate inquiry that can be pursued from a mitigated skepticism of common life. I, however, am not persuaded that Hume can justifiably leave aside cosmic questions *if* his naturalism is to be justified by suggesting that it is reasonable to give a certain degree of trust to what the current of nature induces us to believe. I think it is a philosophically live question whether a secular or religious account of the world can provide the best account of the totality of human experience. Although my main concern in this dissertation is to consider the practical question of how the notion of transcendence in religion (particularly in Christianity as one major religious form) pertains to flourishing, I hold open the possibility, despite Hume's philosophical challenges, that robust religious belief can be in principle reasonable, and reasonable in a way that could underscore its practical importance.[36]

With respect to the content of this chapter, then, I think that while Hume has significant skeptical arguments against some of the key tenets of Christian morality, I am not certain that he renders all versions of Christian morality unreasonable or that he closes the door to the possibility that some notion of the transcendent is important for

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[35] For different but complementary arguments that Hume illegitimately excludes (revealed) religion see Scott Yenor's "Revealed Religion and the Politics of Humanity in Hume's Philosophy of Common Life" (2006).

[36] Correspondingly, I want to resist the philosophical closure to cosmic questions that Hume played a hand in bringing about and suggest the need for greater openness and attention to them—if such openness is chastened by the important lessons modernity, and Hume himself, has taught us.

providing a better account of our specifically moral experience. Correspondingly, I am

not persuaded that he successfully shows the sufficiency of his secular ethic for giving

us what we want and need in an ethical theory. Finally, I am not convinced that religious

morality has nothing very positive to contribute to the moral life. These are topics I will

explore in Chapters Five and Six. In the remainder of this chapter, however, I want to

look at Hume's critiques of religious morality and his secular moral alternative. Even in

light of my wariness toward the way in which he delegitimizes most religious belief by

excluding it from the sphere of common life on which his constructive philosophy is

founded, it nevertheless is a powerful perspective.

*II. Hume's Epistemological Critique of Religious Morality as Pertaining to Christian
Morality*

I begin with Hume's epistemological reasons for rejecting religious and

specifically Christian morality. In this chapter I will focus primarily on why Hume

denies that morality is dependent upon revealed religion (see section *II.a.*), since

traditional Christian morality necessarily relies upon the Bible as the authoritative

revelatory source,[37] and because Hume's rehabilitation of pride and critique of humility

targets revealed religion (specifically, Christianity) rather than natural. I will, however,

explain why Hume rejects the view that natural religion is ultimately required to ground

morality as well (see section *II.b.*). Hume's objection to the alleged dependence of

morality on natural religion will also be pertinent to Hume's overall critique of Christian

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[37] Both Protestants and Catholics also think God reveals himself in and through the life of the Church. More emphasis is placed on tradition in Catholicism than in Protestantism, however, because of their different conceptions of the relationship between scripture and tradition. Their respective ways of understanding this relationship differently informs the moral traditions in both groups, but I need not develop such nuance in the body of the text as it does not influence the general shape of Hume's critique. (Furthermore, in the eighteenth-century an appeal to revelation typically referred to the Bible, particularly the New Testament, and tended not to include an appeal to general revelation through the spiritual practice of the life of the Church (Gaskin 1993a, 318).)

morality insofar as many Christian thinkers have sought to integrate the supposed truths of revelation with what can be ascertained about God through reason. (For example, this was common in eighteenth-century apologetics, where the reasons given for believing in God often consisted in appeals to arguments as well as to the self-verification that was thought to be contained within scripture (Gaskin 1993a, 318).) Although Hume's discussions of revealed and natural religion are situated in an eighteenth-century context, I will show how they are applicable to the two dominant theological trajectories— Christian humanism and hyper-Augustinianism—discussed in the previous chapter.

a. Hume's Epistemological Rejection of Morality Based in Revealed Religion

I begin with some of Hume's epistemological critiques of religion that would pertain to the view that morality, whether in whole or in part, is grounded in divine revelation (i.e., in revealed religion). One way of construing the relationship between revelation and morality can be seen in divine command theory, which was prevalent among hyper-Augustinian Protestant Reformers.[38] According to divine command theorists, what *makes* something good is that God performs that activity or commands it of us. Divine command theory is aligned with theological voluntarism, the position that goodness is located in divine choice rather than divine intellect.[39] On this view, God's will, whatever that happens to be, is necessarily good; there is ultimately no standard of goodness separate from or higher than God's will that the human mind can grasp and by which God's own actions can be assessed. For the voluntarist/divine command theorist,

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[38] David Fate Norton shows how Hume combats divine command theory in his rejection of Christian ethics, but he seems to treat divine command theory as the only way a Christian could conceive of the relationship between revelation and morality (1991, 47-58). The previous chapter should have made clear that this is false.

[39] William of Ockham expresses the logical upshot of voluntarism well when he says that God could command that he be hated instead of loved, and if he did so, then hatred of God would be a virtue (Schneewind 1998, 25).

therefore, our apprehension of the good at root depends upon our having access to divine revelation through which the commands and purposes of God are promulgated. In other words, from this perspective it is ultimately not through reason that we come to know what is right but through faith in revelation. (Calvin is, at bottom, a voluntarist and so Hume, who was raised as a Calvinist, would have been well acquainted with this version of Christian morality, both in theory and in its practical ramifications.[40]) As I will explain below, divine command theory tends to flourish within the hyper-Augustinian strand in Western Christianity, particularly in the Protestant trajectory, rather than in the Christian humanist strand.

Another version of the dependence of morality on revelation can be seen in accounts of supernatural virtues which build upon and complete natural virtues, such as in Aquinas's account of the supernatural virtues of faith, hope, and charity (see ST II-II.1-46). While Aquinas thinks that reason can discern the natural virtues and the natural law without having recourse to revelation, it is through Scripture that God reveals that he welcomes us to friendship with him and to participate in his love for the world (charity), and that faith and hope in God are virtues that facilitate such friendship. Belief that God has revealed himself in this way is in harmony with reason and human experience, Aquinas argues, but it is not *derived from* human reason. Nevertheless, if, as Aquinas thinks, our ultimate end is friendship with God, then the nature of the good life, human fulfillment, and virtue cannot be understood in full apart from divine revelation through which God extends the invitation to charity.

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[40] Calvin's voluntarism is clear in his statements like the following: "God's will is so much the highest rule of righteousness that whatever he wills, by the very fact that he wills it, must be considered righteous. When, therefore, one asks why God has so done, we must reply: because he has willed it. But if you proceed further to ask why he has so willed, you are seeking something greater and higher than God's will, which cannot be found" (*Institutes* III.xxiii.2).

Notwithstanding the crucial differences between the ways that divine command theorists and Thomistic eudaimonists understand the relationship between revelation and morality, Hume would object to both accounts. Hume does not directly engage those who think morality is dependent upon or ultimately grounded in revealed religion as he does with proponents of natural religion, presumably in part because Hume did not see it as worth serious engagement, nor was it a view expressed by the major moral philosophers of his day. Nonetheless an overall critique of revealed religion as a basis for morality can be developed from his many criticisms of revealed religion in general, particularly from his famous essay "Of Miracles," in Section X of the first *Enquiry*, which can be read as an attack on the credentials of Christian revelation.

Although "Of Miracles" is an explicit assault on the reliability of testimony concerning miracles, its arguments implicitly call into question the legitimacy of divine revelation and, with it, appeals to revelation as the basis of morality. Hume's arguments against believing in miracles entail that the wise person ought not to believe many of the core events of Christianity (e.g., the virgin birth, the resurrection of Christ, etc.), and, correspondingly, ought not to regard the scripture that testifies to them to be authoritative.[41] Furthermore, divinely inspired texts are themselves miraculous and are, therefore, subject to the same criticism Hume levels at belief in all miracles.

Hume's general argument in X.1 proceeds as follows: 1) "A wise man…proportions his belief to the evidence" (EHU X.1, 110). 2) Some events occur regularly and consistently in our experience (e.g., objects fall when dropped), while others occur with less regularity (e.g., some people recover from leukemia, whereas

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[41] Hume prudently does not make these entailments explicit, but the scope of his critique of miracles would not have been missed by his more astute readers.

others do not). Events that occur with imperfect regularity admit to varying degrees of

probability. Greater probability (i.e., more regular conformity to experience) generally

amounts to weightier evidence. 3) We experience only a limited number of events first-

hand, and therefore our knowledge of a great deal of information depends upon the

testimony of witnesses. 4) Our experience of the epistemologically-relevant character

traits of a witness, as well as the extent to which the testimony conforms to the

regularities of our experience, should inform the degree to which the wise person trusts

the witness's report. The utter incredibility of a report discredits an even an otherwise

trustworthy witness. 5) A miracle is "a violation of the laws of nature" (EHU X.1, 114);

in other words, by definition a miracle runs directly counter to the surest regularities

afforded to us by experience. 6) Hence, the same criterion that renders an event

miraculous simultaneously renders it not credible, since credibility can be secured only

by how well a claim measures against the standard of uniform experience. 7) There is,

thus, always weightier evidence that the miracle did not occur than that the witness is

reliable. It is always more probable that the witness is mistaken, or lying, than that the

invariable occurrences in our experience have been transgressed. 8) The testimony of a

miracle is *de facto* never strong enough to command the belief of the wise person. (Note

that Hume is not making the claim that miracles are impossible, however much he may

have doubted this. Rather, he is claiming that we are never warranted in believing in

miracles on the basis of testimony.[42])

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[42] Since Hume is not arguing that miracles are impossible (and, indeed, since an *a priori* argument
to this effect cannot be made), it seems he is not in a position to claim that a person is unjustified in
believing a miracle that one has witnessed first-hand (though his argument may suggest that we should
doubt the veracity of our own experience). We might think, for example, of *Dialogues* III where Cleanthes
suggests that if "an articulate voice were heard in the clouds" that "convey[ed] some instruction altogether
worthy of a benevolent Being" (D 54), we would be justified in inferring that the voice was God. As
Cleanthes remarks, "Could you possibly hesitate a moment concerning the cause of this voice?" (D 54). In

Much in Hume's argument here can and has been contested.[43] Alasdair

MacIntyre, for example, argues, I think rightly, that Hume depends upon assuming the

absolute uniformity and regularity of nature, which he cannot justify on the basis of his

epistemology and which a theist would not accept to begin with (MacIntyre 1994, 96-

99). John Earman maintains that Hume's argument is epistemologically problematic

insofar as it excludes from the outset the possibility that evidence for a miracle could be

credible (2000, 3-4). Despite these and other criticisms, however, Hume's case against

belief in miracles has not only enduring plausibility, but it is also far-reaching. As he

argues, "a miracle can never be proved, so as to be the foundation of a system of

religion" (EHU X.2, 127). Hume's arguments amount to saying that it is never

reasonable to believe in divine revelation (for God's self-revelation to humans would be

miraculous by Hume's account) and in the specific miracles to which such revelation

attests. At the very least they imply that it is always more reasonable to doubt revelation

than to trust it.

Hume's attitude towards belief in miracles and, hence, that God reveals himself

through scripture, is nicely captured in his ironic remark near the end of X.2:

> I am the better pleased with the method of reasoning here delivered, as I think it
> may serve to confound those dangerous friends or disguised enemies to the
> *Christian Religion*, who have undertaken to defend it by the principles of human
> reason. Our most holy religion is founded on *Faith*, not on reason; and it is a sure

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"Of Miracles," however, Hume takes for granted that his readers have *not* experienced a miracle first-hand. With this assumption in place, I interpret Hume to be arguing that even if a miracle did in fact occur, the wise person is never justified in believing it *on the basis of testimony*. In other words, if a voice *did* actually speak from the clouds and was heard by another person, we would not be justified in believing that person's testimony to that miracle because from our epistemic vantage point it is nevertheless more likely that the person is mistaken than that such an event occurred.

[43] For commentary on "Of Miracles" see MacIntyre 1994, Earman 2000, Fogelin 2003, Flew 1961 (chapter 8), and Gaskin 1988 (chapter 8). For a contemporary of Hume who engaged specifically with "Of Miracles," see George Campbell's *A Dissertation on Miracles* and Hume's response to Campbell's dissertation in his 1761 letter to Hugh Blair (LDH 1, 348-51).

method of exposing it to put it to such a trial as it is, by no means, fitted to endure. (EHU X.2, 129-30)

Notice that in contrast to certain Christian thinkers such as Aquinas who saw faith as completing reason, Hume here portrays faith as antithetical to reason, i.e., as irrational and necessarily fideistic, as belief which obtains *without* evidence or even in spite of strong counter-evidence.[44] As such, his claim that Christianity is founded on faith is in no way an endorsement of faith; rather, it is a cynical insult that is meant to show its foolish intellectual bankruptcy.

This view of faith bears more similarities to the hyper-Augustinian strand in the Christian West than to the Christian humanist strand. Recall that for the hyper-Augustinian, human nature (including our rational capacities) is understood to be profoundly corrupted by the Fall. From this conception comes greater mistrust of reason and an emphasis on faith as the only sure pathway to moral and spiritual truth. It is unsurprising, then, that hyper-Augustinians were often divine command theorists, for there is an affinity between advocating faith over and against reason and the view that morality is known not through reason but through faith in divine revelation by which divine commands are expressed. (Calvinism, which is hyper-Augustinian and voluntaristic, likely informs Hume's portrayal of faith in relation to reason here.[45]) Hume's attack on belief in miracles and the irrational basis for faith that it implies thus would clearly extend to include a critique of the attempt to root morality in divine

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[44] This would have been an affront to the view expressed by John Locke, Samuel Clarke, and many others around the beginning of the eighteenth century that it was reasonable to believe in the special revelation of the Bible, particularly the New Testament, primarily because certain miracles had authenticated New Testament doctrine (Gaskin 1993b, xi-xii).

[45] To be precise, however, Calvin was not quite as pessimistic about the effects of human fallenness on reason as was Luther. While Calvin thought that fallen human reason is completely unable to perceive spiritual truth, it is still able to recognize truth in social and political matters. Followers of Calvin, however, were more skeptical than Calvin himself about the operations of fallen human reason even in these areas (see Herdt 1997, 238 n14).

commands. Such a theory necessarily depends upon the kind of faith (in this case, faith in the miracle of divinely-inspired texts) that Hume regards as unreasonable and ultimately groundless.

Hume's moral philosophy poses a further challenge to divine command theory. Hume argues that our morality is made intelligible by reference to human experience; virtuous character traits are those advancing human happiness and utility (EPM 268, 289, see also T 3.3.1.30, 377). By contrast, appealing to an ultimately arbitrary divine command does little to explain *why* specific qualities and actions are good. Not only, then, does Hume's account have crucial explanatory power that divine theory lacks, but it provides a way to assess purported divine commands themselves. On Hume's account those commands of God that *are* in fact good (e.g., do not murder, do not steal, etc.) can be *known* to be so by the way they further natural human flourishing. Those commands that cannot be rendered intelligible by experience, however, amount to little more than superstition and are not genuine moral obligations.

Hume's critique of miracles also applies to the specifically Christian elements of the Thomistic way of conceiving of Christian morality, despite the different construal of the relationship between faith and reason that is operative in the Christian humanist tradition that underlies this conception. While "Of Miracles" carries no implicit objection to the natural law component of Aquinas's moral philosophy, its subtle critique of belief in the authority of scripture strikes at the very basis for Aquinas's account of the theological virtues, which are regarded as the crowning virtues of the Christian life. If Hume is right that the wise person is unjustified in accepting the authority of scripture, it seems that she or he would thereby be unjustified in believing that scripture serves as

an epistemologically legitimate ground for accepting the so-called theological virtues as genuine virtues.

A Christian humanist might reply, however, that the central message of love that unfolds in Scripture importantly illuminates human experience,[46] and hence that it is at least reasonable to believe that Scripture was divinely inspired and has a bearing on the moral life. Aquinas generally takes an approach of this sort. He contends that through *reason* we can ascertain those natural moral laws that promote human flourishing by reflecting upon our experience of our natural inclinations towards such flourishing. Through *faith* we can come to believe that God is a person who has revealed himself to us and has invited us to participate in friendship with him (cf. the virtue of charity) and, by extension, in his love for the world. This sort of love requires transformation of our natural aversions to certain others and enables compassion for social outcasts and enemies. For Aquinas, however, faith that charity is, in fact, central to the moral life is not *opposed to* reason. It instead builds upon what reason discerns about natural human flourishing, but it raises us to a higher level of awareness of the depths of transformation we need to undergo to flourish most fully. Thus, Aquinas thinks that 'revealed religion' significantly informs the moral life, for if God exists and has truly revealed himself in this way, this would clearly influence how genuine human flourishing is conceived and what virtues are constitutive of such flourishing. For Aquinas, then, faith/trust in divine

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[46] Hume, however, would presumably take issue with this point. Perhaps he would argue that the demanding nature of Christian love is not compatible with the experience of the seemingly ineradicable "elements of the wolf and serpent" in our breasts (see EPM IX, 271); in other words, that it is an idealistic moral vision, deeply incongruent with aspects of human nature, rather than a realistic, attainable vision, appropriate to the kind of being that we actually are. The question of whether and to what extent the wolf and serpent can and should be transformed is a deeper dispute between Christian morality and Hume's moral philosophy, which will be raised again (albeit indirectly) in Chapter Five and Six.

revelation is not in conflict with reason and experience; rather, faith itself, and by extension Christian morality, is seen as reasonable.

While Aquinas' understanding of the relationship between revelation and morality is more promising than the divine command approach, it is nevertheless not only Hume's arguments in "Of Miracles" that would challenge the epistemic legitimacy of those specifically Christian elements (i.e., those elements that essentially depend upon revelation) in Aquinas' account of morality. Throughout Hume's corpus, he denies that there is a strong philosophical basis for belief in a deity resembling the Christian God (and thus for regarding faith in revelation as reasonable). The *Treatise* and the first *Enquiry* call into question whether a fully honest belief in God is even possible since no impression corresponds to the idea of God (let alone a personal God who in some way encounters human beings), and they argue against traditional Christian concepts such as the 'soul' and 'final cause.' In the *Natural History of Religion* Hume argues that theistic belief arose out of fear rather than reason. *The Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* is a particularly devastating battery of arguments against traditional arguments for the existence and perfections of God. When Hume's writings are taken in total, he does indeed seem to deny that there is adequate rational evidence for believing in a deity resembling the Christian God revealed in scripture, thereby questioning the reasonableness of Christian faith as a whole. While there is much to be debated regarding Hume's arguments against Christian belief, my aim in this chapter is merely to present Hume's critiques that would be applicable to Christian morality, not to evaluate the success of his critiques. It suffices to point out that Hume regards belief in divine revelation to be far from epistemologically justified, and this entails also that any

specifically Christian morality, i.e., a morality based in whole or in part on revelation, lacks sufficient epistemic credentials.

b. Hume's Critique of Morality Grounded in Natural Religion

It is clear that Hume would find religious and specifically Christian morality understood either in terms of divine command or as including elements that go beyond morality ascertained by rational reflection upon common human experience (such as the theological virtues in Aquinas) to be epistemologically illegitimate. But so too does he object to those elements of moral philosophy defended by some Christians as being intelligible to all by virtue of our common human nature and ability to reason about the good, such as Aquinas' account of natural law. While Aquinas's account of natural law does not depend upon a specifically Christian notion of God, it nonetheless requires that the cosmos is teleologically ordered and is purposeful as such precisely *because of* the orientation of all being to God.[47] Thus, the question can be raised: Does morality in some sense depend upon God, even if only a minimally-conceived God of philosophy and not necessarily the God of Christian revelation? A related question that could be raised: is there nothing morally at stake with respect to whether or not God exists, and whether or not the universe is ultimately purposeful or purposeless? Further, if there is good reason to think some sort of deity may exist and that this is morally significant

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[47] Whether there is any ultimate cosmic purpose and what is ethically at stake in this question is, I think, a crucial question for moral philosophy—though in many ways it has been treated as a peripheral issue in ethical debates over at least the last hundred years. Some nineteenth-century thinkers who were particularly sensitive to this question were, of course, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, and, later, William James. Charles Taylor and Bernard Williams are two contemporary figures who have also seen deeply into why and how our answers to larger cosmic questions matter morally.

and/or better able to make sense of our moral experience, might this not serve as a partial ground for a reasonable faith?[48]

These are particularly pertinent questions for Hume who was in conversation with key figures of the modern natural law tradition, such as Grotius, Hobbes, Pufendorf, Carmichael, and especially Francis Hutcheson (see Forbes 1975, 3-90).[49] Although in contrast to the classical natural law account given by Aquinas, for whom the natural law is very explicitly grounded in the eternal law of God and points to the perfection of human nature, modern natural law theorists sought to develop an account of morality from studying human nature as we find it without reference to our final end.[50] Furthermore, while the modern natural law theorists did not appeal directly to any specific conception of God in their moral philosophy, with the possible exception of Hobbes they themselves held, and their accounts of morality tacitly depend upon, particular understandings of God (even if only a minimalist deistic conception) (Forbes 1975, 41). A central way in which God factors into conceptions of modern natural law is by ensuring some providential design or order, which (like Aquinas) was thought to be ultimately needed in order to make sense of morality.

Against this view Hume argues that we cannot establish that there is a providential design, and, furthermore, he contends that such design is unnecessary for

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[48] See John Cottingham's *Why Believe?* (2009) for interesting and insightful explorations of these kinds of questions.

[49] Hutcheson is not always recognized as a natural law theorist. Hutcheson's most well-known works, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections* and *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, employ the new experimental method in ethics to which Hume refers in the *Treatise* and do not look like treatises of natural law. However, Hutcheson's other works, especially *A System of Moral Philosophy*, show him to be a student of Carmichael, who held that the natural law could be deduced from the nature and existence of God as known through natural religion. As we will see, and as Jennifer Herdt has shown, Hutcheson ultimately thinks that divine Providence is needed to explain our 'moral sense,' i.e., why we disinterestedly approve of virtues and actions that do not promote our private advantage (see Herdt 1997, 27-29, 50-60). See also Gill (2006, chap. 14).

[50] For a discussion of crucial shifts in the development of natural law as well as of Hume's relationship to modern natural law theorists, see Chapter One of Herdt 1997.

grounding morality. One work in which Hume seeks to undermine the arguments of philosophers or theologians who maintain that a providential order is foundational for morality is Section XI of *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, entitled "Of a particular Providence and of a future State."[51] Mossner points out that Hume's attack on design in Section XI would have been an "even more hazardous enterprise" than his assault on the miraculous foundations of Christianity in Section X (1978, 657). The argument against belief in miracles would not have been that controversial to philosophers, many of whom tended to be Deists rather than theists. Moreover, Hume's orthodox Christian readers may not have found problematic Hume's claim that belief in miracles depends upon faith (however irrational faith is there portrayed). The argument for design, however, was "the then most widely accepted argument for the being of a God" (Mossner 1978, 657), and thus, opposing it would have been perceived as a significant challenge both to Christian theists and Deists alike.

"Of a particular Providence and of a future State" is presented in the form of a dialogue between the narrator, who represents "the Athenian people" and the narrator's friend, who assumes the role of "Epicurus." In the dialogue, "Epicurus," who is generally thought to represent Hume's own position, defends himself against the charge that he "seems to loosen, in great measure, the ties of morality, and may be supposed, for that reason, pernicious to the peace of civil society" (EHU 133-34) by denying divine providence and an afterlife.[52] "Epicurus" therefore aims to show that the answer to the questions regarding whether such a providence or future state exists is "entirely

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[51] Interestingly, Hume originally entitled Section XI, "Of the Practical Consequences of Natural Religion" (see Mossner 1978, 656).
[52] Epicurus is largely thought to represent Hume's views, since Epicurus' position is consistent with Hume's avowed positions in EPM, T 3, and NHR.

indifferent to the peace of society and security of government" and hence that "when…I deny a providence and a future state, I undermine not the foundations of society, but advance principles, which they themselves, upon their own topics, if they are argue consistently, must allow to be solid and satisfactory" (EHU 135).

"Epicurus," therefore, must challenge the implicit arguments upon which the charge against him rests, namely, the argument from design and its claimed significance for morality. The line of reasoning against which he must defend himself generally runs as follows: we can infer that the natural order of the universe must have been caused by an intelligent and benevolent Creator, and we can also infer that from the attributes of the Creator as benevolent and wise that virtue will be rewarded and work out for good, while vice will be punished and end in ruin, either in this life or the next. Hume's main line of attack, as I will soon explain in greater detail, is to have "Epicurus" argue that it is not rationally justifiable to infer a cause (i.e., an intelligent, benevolent Creator) from an effect (the order of the world) and then to make inferences from that cause to new effects (i.e., reward for virtue and punishment for vice).

Francis Hutcheson, a thinker with whom Hume corresponded as he was writing his initial statement of his moral philosophy in the *Treatise*, appeals to a version of the design argument in his account of morality (see Herdt 1997, 50-60; see also Gill 185-87). Hume, thus, would likely have had Hutcheson in mind when composing Section XI of the first *Enquiry*, and his argument there can be more fully appreciated by noticing its departures from Hutcheson's moral philosophy. Hutcheson attempts to base morality upon the 'moral sense' we find in human nature. This moral sense, he thinks, enables us to disinterestedly approve of benevolent characters and actions. Hutcheson argues that,

"this very moral sense, implanted in rational agents, to delight in, and admire whatever actions flow from the study of the good of others, is one of the strongest evidences of goodness in the author of nature" (quoted in Herdt 1997, 56). Here Hutcheson states the relationship between effect and cause in such a way as to infer the latter from the former. He elsewhere suggests not only that a benevolent Creator is needed in order to ground and to explain why we have a moral sense, hence arguing from effect to cause, but also that we can make inferences from that cause to new effects. He says,

> It remains…that as the Author of Nature has determined us to receive, by our external senses, pleasant and disagreeable ideas of objects according as they are useful or hurtful to our bodies, and to receive from uniform objects the pleasures of beauty and harmony, to excite us to the pursuit of knowledge and to reward us for it, or to be an argument to us of his goodness, as the uniformity itself proves his existence, whether we had a sense of beauty in uniformity or not; in the same manner he has given us a moral sense to direct our actions, and to give us still nobler pleasures. So that while we are only intending the good of others, we undesignedly promote our own greatest private good. (Hutcheson 2003, 510)

In sum, then, for Hutcheson, the design he regards as inherent in human nature (the effect), especially in our moral sense, points to a benevolent Creator (the cause) who providentially endowed us with such sense. From God's benevolent nature he furthermore infers that we promote our own good in and through the disinterested promotion of the good of others (the new effect). The key point then in the relationship between design and morality for Hutcheson is that it is God's providential design that makes intelligible why we have a moral sense that allows us to make disinterested moral judgments and why the disinterested promotion of others' good contributes to our own good.[53]

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[53] Bernard Mandeville (drawing on Pierre Nicole) and Adam Smith, other eighteenth-century thinkers, stand this account on its head. They begin with self-love rather than disinterested benevolence and argue that pursuing our individual self-interest in commercial activity will redound to the public benefit. In *Wealth of Nations*, IV.ii.9 and in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, IV.i.10 Smith speaks of an

Hume, however, has two major objections to this kind of argument. First, he finds these inferences from effect to cause and then from cause to new effect to be unjustified. As "Epicurus" says,

> If the cause be known only by the effect, we never ought to ascribe to it any qualities beyond what are precisely requisite to produce the effect: Nor can we, by any rules of just reasoning, return back from the cause, and infer other effects from it, beyond those by which alone it is known to us. … The cause must be proportioned to the effect; and if we exactly and precisely proportion it, we shall never find in it any qualities, that point farther, or afford an inference concerning any other design or performance. Such qualities must be somewhat beyond what is merely requisite for producing the effect, which we examine. (EHU 136-37)

In other words, even if it were possible to establish the existence of an intelligent Creator (a possibility which Hume calls into question most forcefully in the *Dialogues*), it is not legitimate to attribute any more goodness and wisdom in this deity than we observe in the world (EHU 138-39, 144-45).

Second, Hume thinks that if we adequately attend to our experience of the world, we must acknowledge that the cosmos does not have the kind of order that is often attributed to it in design arguments. Consistency requires that we take into account the "evil and disorder, with which the world so much abounds" as well as the goodness and order (EHU 138-39). A strict inference, then, from what we actually observe about the world would seem to lead to the conclusion that God is at least somewhat morally indifferent. While many theologians attempt to explain the compatibility between God's benevolence and evil in the world by arguing that evil originates in human free will, the force of Hume's argument is to point out that a benevolent conception of God is not in fact entirely derived from experience, and hence design arguments do not really start from an adequate description of the "effect" they are seeking to explain. Rather, they

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"invisible hand" guiding our self-interested commercial activity towards public benefit. In *The Fable of the Bees* Mandeville argues that private vice (e.g., greed) results in public benefit.

smuggle in some previously formed idea of God that, in turn, tacitly informs which features of experience are highlighted and which are neglected.[54] The cause that is purportedly proved (a benevolent wise God), then, is the very conception of God that shaped the inadequate way of construing the effect from the start (i.e., attending only to the order and goodness that is in the world).[55] We depart from experience once again when we infer "new effects" from this pre-formed conception of God, namely that a benevolent God will reward virtue and punish vice. Hume therefore regards these inferences to and from divine providence to be "mere conjecture and hypothesis" (EHU 145), insofar as they fly beyond the bounds of human experience.

While Hume has not proven that the universe is *not* providentially ordered, he has shown that providential design cannot be known with any certainty and, furthermore, that there are strong reasons to doubt that the world is governed by a perfectly benevolent and wise Creator. It is still possible, however, for a theist (or Deist) to give an alternate account of the evil and disorder in the cosmos and to attempt to argue that divine providence still makes the best sense of the totality of our experience. Furthermore, it is open for one to contend that it does make a difference for how we understand the nature, content, and motivational sources for morality if the cosmos is or is not understood to be providentially ordered—*even if* it is granted that such an order cannot be philosophically proven. Therefore, Hume's most important objection to the

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[54] See, for instance where "Epicurus" says, "Let your gods, therefore, O philosophers, be suited to the present appearances of nature: and presume not to alter these appearances by arbitrary suppositions, in order to suit them to the attributes, which you so fondly ascribe to your deities" (EHU 138).

[55] See, for example, where "Epicurus" says, "These attributes, then, are, it seems, beforehand, taken for granted in their greatest latitude. And upon that supposition, I own, that such conjectures may, perhaps, be admitted as plausible solutions of the ill phenomena. But still I ask; Why take these attributes for granted, or why ascribe to the cause any qualities but what actually appear in the effect? Why torture your brain to justify the course of nature upon suppositions, which, for aught you know, may be entirely imaginary, and which there are to be found no traces in the course of nature?" (EHU 139).

claim that natural religion (and, hence, God) is significant for morality is not that the

notion of providential design is beyond philosophical proof; rather, it is that divine

providence is *wholly irrelevant* to the grounding of morality and practically

inconsequential for motivating virtue. For example, "Epicurus" says,

> I deny a providence, you say, and supreme governor of the world, who guides the course of events, and punishes the vicious with infamy and disappointment, and rewards the virtuous with honour and success, in all their undertakings. But surely, I deny not the course of events, which lies open to every one's inquiry and examination. I acknowledge, that, in the present order of things, virtue is attended with more peace of mind than vice, and meets with a more favourable reception from the world… You tell me, indeed, that this disposition of things proceeds from intelligence and design. But whatever it proceeds from, the disposition itself, on which depends our happiness or misery, and consequently our conduct and deportment in life is still the same. It is still open for me, as well as for you, to regulate my behavior, by my experience of past events. (EHU 140)

In other words, our experience that virtue meets with the approval of others and is

attended with internal satisfaction, and that vice meets with the opposite, is sufficient to

explain and to motivate morality, "Epicurus" thinks. He concludes:

> All the philosophy, therefore, in the world, and all the religion, which is nothing but a species of philosophy, will never be able to carry us beyond the usual course of experience, or give us measures of conduct and behaviour different from those which are furnished by reflections on common life. No new fact can ever be inferred from the religious hypothesis; no event foreseen or foretold; no reward or punishment expected or dreaded, beyond what is already known by practice and observation. (EHU 146)

It is to a more detailed account of just how Hume attempts to develop a moral theory

solely by "reflections on common life," independent of providing any answers to larger

cosmic questions that I now turn. As I will later show, Hume's attempt to account for

morality without depending upon answers to cosmic questions has certain advantages,

particularly for facilitating moral discourse in a religiously pluralistic world by focusing

our attention on the shared goods of human life and by correcting certain harmful

tendencies to which religious moralities can tend. However, whether Hume is right that the possibility of a providentially-ordered cosmos makes no practically significant difference to morality will be a topic explored in Chapter Five and Six. Thus far it is clear that Hume would think that both the divine command and natural law conceptions of Christian morality are epistemologically without justification and that a solid epistemological basis for morality is to be sought not in the religious domain but within the limits of human experience itself.

III. Hume's Secular Morality of Common Life

Against the backdrop of Hume's skeptical arguments that are relevant to and so threaten to undermine religiously grounded morality, in Book III of the *Treatise* and in the second *Enquiry*, Hume develops his positive, naturalistic account of morality based solely on "reflections on common life" without depending upon metaphysical hypotheses and speculations that go beyond what he regards as the confines of human understanding and the bounds of human experience. In contrast to traditional moral theories, which typically begin from a particular metaphysical understanding of the human being and her place in the cosmos, Hume provides an empirically descriptive account of the kinds of character traits that we find "amiable or odious, praiseworthy or blameable" in the everyday affairs of ordinary life (EPM 172-74). In so doing, Hume attempts to shed light on why we share a common language of moral praise and blame and to explain how our moral practices have come to be what they are.

Upon observing what we do in fact praise and blame, Hume concludes that a person experiences a "pleasing sentiment of approbation" when viewing qualities of character that are "useful or agreeable to the person himself or to others" (EPM 268,

289, see also T 3.3.1.30, 377). Such qualities we regard as virtues, and those which are disagreeable or run counter to utility we regard as vices (EPM 268, 289).[56] For example, Hume argues that we regard benevolence and justice as virtues because they are *useful to others*, while we regard discretion, industry, and strength of mind as virtues primarily because they are *useful to ourselves*; we consider wit, eloquence, cleanliness, decency, and good manners to be virtues because they are *agreeable to others*, while we judge cheerfulness, serenity, magnanimity, and 'a relish for pleasure, if accompanied by temperance and decency' as virtues because they are *agreeable to the person him or her self* (see EPM, Sections II-III, VI-VIII for Hume's account of these and other virtues, see also T 3.3.2-5). Thus, Hume's moral philosophy is built around the observation that because happiness and well-being is a central concern for us, we naturally approve of that which promotes human flourishing.

Hume, however, is careful to note that we do not regard the feeling of approval as such to be sufficient for *moral* evaluation; rather, he says, moral sentiments are of a "particular" or "peculiar" kind.[57] For instance, we commonly distinguish between moral approval and approval of those things which merely gratify our narrow self-interest. One of the features of moral approval, Hume thinks, is that the feeling of approbation constitutive of moral judgment is a calm, impartial passion, rather than a violent or prejudiced one. What is needed in order to make distinctively moral evaluations, Hume

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[56] As Hume says, "An action, or sentiment, or character is virtuous or vicious; why? because its view causes a pleasure or uneasiness of a particular kind. In giving a reason, therefore, for the pleasure or uneasiness, we sufficiently explain the vice or virtue. To have the sense of virtue, is nothing but to *feel* a satisfaction of a particular kind from the contemplation of character" (T 3.1.2.3, 303). Again, Hume "defines virtue to be *whatever mental action or quality gives to a spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation;* and vice the contrary" (EPM 289).

[57] "We do not infer a character to be virtuous, because it pleases: But in feeling that it pleases after such a particular manner, we in effect feel that it is virtuous" (T. 3.1.2.3, 303). In other words, not all feelings are constitutive of moral evaluation; moral evaluation requires unique sentiments, which Hume goes on to describe.

therefore argues, is to view character impartially, from what in the *Treatise* he calls the "general view or survey."[58] Hume remarks,

> 'Tis only when a character is considered in general, without reference to our particular interest, that it causes such a feeling or sentiment, as denominates it good or evil. 'Tis true, those sentiments, from interest and morals, are apt to be confounded, and naturally run into one another. It seldom happens that we do not think an enemy vicious, and can distinguish betwixt his opposition to our interest and real villainy or baseness. But this hinders not, but that sentiments are, in themselves distinct; a man of temper and judgment may preserve himself from these illusions. (T 3.1.2.4, 303-304)[59]

So, in Hume's descriptive analysis, we do distinguish between moral evaluation and self-interested feeling, and the impartial perspective of the general view is Hume's way of accounting for this difference.

Hume trusts that when we overlook self-interest and take up this general point of view, our moral sentiments of praise and blame will be more or less universal.[60] Hume's confidence that there will be widespread agreement in our moral responses is built, in part, upon his argument that we observe there to be a consistent manner in which the passions arise among human beings; i.e., the same sorts of things that give one person pleasure or pain, will give others pleasure or pain as well. (I will discuss this further in Chapter Four.) It is also built upon his contention that moral evaluation is rooted in the natural sentiment of "humanity" or "sympathy,"[61] which he thinks experience shows to

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[58] The language of the "general view" drops out in the second *Enquiry*, but impartiality (i.e., the same phenomenon to which the general view refers) is still required for moral evaluation in the latter work.

[59] Baier points out that Hume should not be understood to mean that our moral judgments issued from the general view necessarily express our actual occurrent sentiments; rather that they express what we judge we *would* feel if we make the appropriate corrections to our sentiments (1995, 179).

[60] I will discuss Hume's attempt to account for rare exceptions to what he regards as our otherwise natural moral responses in the following chapter.

[61] In the *Treatise* Hume uses the term "sympathy" to explain the source of moral evaluation (see T 3.3.6, 393-395), while in the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* he tends to speak of the "sentiment of humanity" (i.e., "fellow-feeling") (see EPM 219-220, fn. 1; 272-273). Although the significance of the shift in terminology is somewhat debated, for my purposes in this chapter I will take these terms as more or less synonymous. Hume suggests that sympathy and humanity are largely

exist in all human beings,[62] and which is made possible only because we take a general pleasure or pain in the same sorts of things. Sympathy becomes crucial to Hume's account of morality, because, according to Hume, it is sympathy that allows us to take up the general point of view, from which we are able to make moral judgments in the first place (see T 3.3.1.6-10, 368-69).

Sympathy enables us to enter into the general view because it allows us to acquire multiple vantage points from which to survey actions and character traits. In this way we become aware of the pleasures, pains, hopes, and desires of others as well as our own. We also gain new perspective with which to view ourselves as we experience others respond to our characteristics and behaviors. Through building up sympathetic experiences over time, we learn that there is a steady core of traits and actions that we approve of in others and that others approve of in us and, by extension, that are morally laudable in general. In this way our capacity for sympathy therefore makes it possible for

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interchangeable, for example, in the footnote on p. 298 in EPM, Appendix II where he speaks of "general benevolence, or humanity, or sympathy" (there is, of course, more similarity between humanity and sympathy than between these and benevolence, since humanity and sympathy denote our capacity to feel the happiness and pain of others as though it were our own, which then provides a basis for our benevolence or "well-wishing" to them). Although Hume there seems to use sympathy and humanity as generally synonymous, there are differences between his use of 'humanity' in the second *Enquiry* and his initial account of sympathy given in Book II of the *Treatise*. In Hume's Book II description of sympathy, our sympathetic tendencies are limited and biased towards one's family and friends; sympathy, as he there describes it, helps to account for group bias and social faction more readily than it can account for impartial understanding. Hence, in Book III of the *Treatise* where Hume speaks of sympathy as the basis for the "general view," he shifts to a more extensive, corrected conception of sympathy. The sentiment of humanity connotes this wider, more extensive sympathy, and perhaps was used in the second *Enquiry* to avoid confusion. (See Herdt 1997, 60-81 for an excellent discussion of the development of sympathy in Hume's ethics, including a discussion of his preference for the language of humanity over sympathy in the second *Enquiry*.) In this chapter I will be assuming an extensive, corrected sympathy in my discussion of Hume's ethics, but in later chapters I will consider the relationship between limited and extensive sympathy and whether Hume ultimately has the resources for motivating the kind of sympathy that is necessary for taking up the general view.

[62] "We are certain, that sympathy is a very powerful principle in human nature. We find, that it has force sufficient to give us the strongest sentiments of approbation, when it operates alone, without the concurrences of any other principles… If we compare all these circumstances we shall not doubt, that sympathy is the chief sources of moral distinctions" (T 3.3.6.1, 393-94).

us to distinguish between private, self-interested preference and the disinterested moral evaluation that is taken from the general view.[63]

Hume's contention that sympathy is foundational to ethics is what enables him to develop a wholly secular moral philosophy—but one that does not, in comparison to secular moral philosophies of Hobbes and Mandeville, regard morality to be wholly built on human artifice—and this becomes clear when comparing his account of natural sympathy or humanity with Hutcheson's account of the "moral sense."[64] These accounts are strikingly similar in that both sympathy and moral sense are human faculties through which we are concerned with the happiness of others and therefore both provide a basis for moral evaluation.[65] However, while Hutcheson seeks to explain why we have this curious faculty called a moral sense by appealing to a providential design, Hume thinks sympathy is a natural enough phenomenon that we can avoid raising questions about its ultimate origins. In an important footnote in the second *Enquiry* he says,

> It is needless to push our researches so far as to ask, why we have humanity or a fellow-feeling with others. It is sufficient, that this is experienced to be a principle in human nature. We must stop somewhere in our examination of causes; and there are, in every science, some general principles, beyond which we cannot hope to find any principle more general. (EPM 219-20, fn. 1)

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[63] Baier stresses that the general view is not a "view from nowhere" (to use Nagel's phrase) but rather is a common *human* viewpoint. As she says, "it aims not at detachment from human concerns but at impartiality, and interpersonal agreement" (1995, 182). Similarly Herdt argues that the general view is not equally distant from the real perspectives of actual persons. Hume suggests, she argues, that the spectator must take up the point of view of the person being evaluated and of those who are most affected by this person's character or action. This implies that for Hume there is not a single 'moral point of view'; rather, any moral judgment must take into account and negotiate between various perspectives. Hume, in fact, will speak in the plural of 'some steady and general points of view' (T 3.3.1.15, 372), views which are arrived at only through sympathetically understanding the various perspectives of other individuals (see Herdt 1997, 71-72). See also Russell (2008, 253) and Gill (2006, 252-54) for a particularized interpretation of the general view.

[64] Hume, in fact, uses the language of "moral sense" (T 3.1.2, 302-6) in the *Treatise* and appeals to sympathy in order to explain it.

[65] For important differences and for a synopsis of Hume's interaction with Hutcheson, see Herdt (1997, 50-60) and Gill (2006, 216-25).

Hume, in other words, thinks that no deeper ontology is needed to ground what might be

called his "phenomenology" of our practices of moral praise or blame. In Hume's view,

and in accord with his mitigated skepticism of common life, nothing is more

epistemologically secure than common human experience; hence, appealing to dubitable

ontology in order to explain further what is clearly evident in experience is unnecessary.

As was said above, Hume's approach to moral philosophy has the practical advantage of

emphasizing what is common among all people and leaving out precisely what can lead

to the most intractable sorts of disagreements—namely, disputes about our ultimate

origins.[66] (In the final chapters, I will explore what sorts of disadvantages emerge when

attempting to isolate morality from answers to larger cosmic questions.)

IV. Hume's Moral Critique of Christian Morality

While Hume regards much religious belief to be epistemologically unwarranted

as well as unnecessary for grounding morality, his perhaps more important objections to

religious morality (and Christian morality particularly concerns us here) are themselves

practical and *moral* critiques. Indeed, it seems that his concern about the harm caused by

morality informed by revealed religion stands principally behind his irreligious aims,

which Russell and Herdt have argued are fundamental to his entire philosophical project.

Specifically, Hume argues that religious morality undermines human well-being insofar

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[66] Certainly accounts of religious morality in the Christian humanist vein can also facilitate moral discourse across difference insofar is there is much shared domain of natural human flourishing that is seen to be identifiable by human beings as such, regardless of their religious or otherwise metaphysical commitments. Nevertheless, Hume worries that the religious "extras" of even those accounts of religious morality that end up being generous to those of different views can intrude upon and so impede moral discourse and attention to the shared natural goods of human life. A potential problem with Hume's concern to promote shared moral discourse by offering a secular account of morality and rendering religious issues peripheral, however, is that it does not encourage people to bring their real and significant differences to the table. Some of the negative consequences on our public discourse of privatizing our deeper beliefs about religion have been well observed by Michael Sandel (see especially his *Democracy's Discontent*, though this theme runs throughout his work) and Robert Bellah in his *Habits of the Heart*.

as it promotes faction, motivates intolerance, and distorts the very content of morality itself. These, I think, are his most interesting criticisms. They suggest that the religious impulse in human beings, although arising from human nature, should be checked, chastised, or deflected, if possible.[67] We can contrast this view, for example, with Augustine who sees the longing for God to be an ineradicable and noble part of our nature and who thinks that the fulfillment of this impulse simultaneously satisfies the deepest aspect of ourselves and is inseparable from moral transformation and contributing to true social peace (cf. *City of God*). In this section I explore why Hume takes the polar opposite view and sees "popular" or revealed religion, and its alleged relationship to morality, as inhibiting psychological health, moral growth, and peace in society.

a. The Dubious Origins of Christian Belief

Part of what Hume sees as harmful in Christian morality lies in what he takes to be the original cause of religious belief. As has been shown above, Hume does not think that belief in divine revelation (nor even belief in the conclusions of natural religion) is based in adequate reflection upon experience. If people have little experiential and rational basis for belief in divine revelation—and hence for those elements of Christian morality that depend upon revelation—by Hume's account why do adherents of "revealed religion" such as Christians believe and act as they do?

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[67] Siebert collects several passages in which Hume refers to religion as a disease, poison, etc. (1990, 95).

Hume's answer to this question is spelled out most fully in *The Natural History of Religion*, in which he gives a naturalistic account of the origin of religious belief.[68] As the title of the work suggests, Hume does not consider the explicit reasons that agents hold for adopting a religious outlook; instead, in a proto-Nietzschean manner, he gives psychological and historical explanations for the reasons why religious belief and ritual arose in the first place. The feature of human nature that gives rise to religious belief, Hume thinks, is fear—namely, fear of those "unknown causes" that have the power to facilitate or to thwart human happiness.

Polytheism, Hume thinks, arose quite naturally among primitive societies for whom the "true springs and causes" of events were unknown. Although these peoples had no direct experience (i.e., impressions) of the deities in which they believed, Hume indicates that it is *reasonable* that people would have sought to make sense of the capricious unfolding of events such as natural disasters, disease, famine, and the like by supposing that they are caused by various powerful beings who are in conflict with one another—however false these suppositions are. It is moreover understandable, Hume thinks, that if the intentions and actions of divine agents lie behind various occurrences in the world, humans would seek to court the favor of those deities in various ways (see NHR I-V).

As intellectual history advanced, however, we became aware that certain sorts of events occur as part of the regular course of nature, and therefore polytheism no longer remained epistemologically viable. Polytheism thus gave rise to theism as the operations of events in the world came to be understood as the governance of a single power. Hume

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[68] In this section I draw heavily from Herdt's interpretation of the *Natural History* (1997, Chapter Five).

does not think theism emerged merely as an attempt to make sense of the ultimate origin of cosmos, however—at least not among the "vulgar" (NHR VI, 153).[69] Rather, it arises perhaps more fundamentally out of the human need for security, our tendency to regard ourselves as allied with the most powerful deity and to view our particular superstitious rituals as that which will most please him, and our susceptibility to be imaginatively carried away by emotional intensity. For example, Hume points out that among polytheistic nations, there is a propensity to regard the god of one's nation as more powerful than the rest, and he then shows how this propensity leads to theism.

> Whether this god, therefore, be considered as their peculiar patron, or as the general sovereign of heaven, his votaries will endeavour, by every art, to insinuate themselves into his favour; and supposing him to be pleased, like themselves, with praise and flattery, there is no eulogy or exaggeration, which will be spared in their addresses to him. In proportion as men's fears or distresses become more urgent, they still invent new strains of adulation; and even he who outdoes his predecessor in swelling up the titles of his divinity, is sure to be outdone by his successor in newer and more pompous epithets of praise. Thus they proceed until they arrive at infinity itself, beyond which there is no farther progress. … When they confine themselves to the notion of a perfect being, the creator of the world, they coincide, by chance, with the principles of reason and true philosophy; though they are guided to that notion, not by reason, of which they are in a great measure incapable, but by the adulation and fears of the most vulgar superstition. (NHR VI, 155)

In other words, as Jennifer Herdt points out, for Hume "Theism, therefore, quite unlike philosophical Deism, is the end result of a practice of flattery spurred on by fear and anxiety" (1997, 174). What his account suggests is that while fear provided the stimulus for the kind of reflection that led primitive peoples to polytheistic conclusions, polytheism itself was a reasonable attempt to make sense of unknown causes prior to the development of philosophy and science (see NHR XI, 165). Hume's account of theism, by contrast, suggests that in the context of our expanding knowledge of natural causes, at

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[69] Hume distinguishes between the "vulgar" and the "enlightened." See Mossner's discussion (1978, 659-661).

least the "vulgar" have no good reasons for arriving at theistic beliefs. As Hume says,

"religionists, in all ages, have involved themselves in the greatest absurdities and

contradictions" (NHR 156).[70] Herdt points out that with respect to theism, then, Hume

seems to believe that fear has become the cause of the belief itself (1997, 174).[71]

Given this underlying cause of religious belief, Hume is therefore concerned that

significantly harmful psychological and social consequences stem from it. This is

especially the case in light of what Hume sees as the tendency of religious belief to

depart from reason and the natural operation of our emotions as is found in common

human experience. Indeed, Hume finds that religious belief *de facto* cannot enjoy the

same strength of conviction as can our beliefs regarding the repeated impressions

received in ordinary life, nor can it tolerate the same interrogation we take to be

meritorious in establishing the truth of events in ordinary life. Religious belief has to be

artificially produced and then maintained precisely by avoiding the demands of reason

that we acknowledge to be important in everyday affairs. On this point, Hume says,

> The conviction of the religionists, in all ages, is more affected than real, and
> scarcely ever approaches, in any degree to that solid belief and persuasion, which

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[70] As Herdt observes, some of these "absurdities and contradictions" that Hume points out have to do with the contradictions in the traditionally ascribed attributes of God (1997, 174-76). She names a few: 1) Religious believers sometimes regard God as wholly transcendent but explain his actions anthropomorphically. 2) They conceive of God as infinite but also as simple and so "run into inexplicable mystery, and destroy the intelligent nature of their deity, on which alone any rational worship or adoration can be founded" (NHR 155). 3) Demea denies that human sentiments can be attributed to a transcendent God (D 58), but then it is difficult to make sense of divine intentional action. 4) Cleanthes points out that divine simplicity conflicts with divine intelligence and action (D 61). The evil and disorder in the world puts strain on either the omnipotence or the benevolence of God (NHR 177). 5) It is difficult to understand why an infinite and transcendent God would be pleased by any number of absurd practices, such as circumcision (NHR VII, 157-58). (Hume certainly raises a number of significant challenges for theists and identifies contradictions in "vulgar" notions of God that need to be corrected. In my view, however, reasonable accounts can be given in support of theism, atheism, or agnosticism, and, moreover, *all* of these perspectives must confront difficult questions so as to avoid "absurdities and contradictions." Though I cannot engage Hume's critiques of religious belief here and notwithstanding his genuine insights, I think he is at times too polemical and hasty in the *Natural History* with respect to his assessment of theism.)

[71] Hume says, for example, "The primary religion of mankind arises chiefly from an anxious fear of future events…" (NHR XIII, 176).

governs us in the common affairs of life. Men dare not avow, even to their own hearts, the doubts which they entertain on such subjects: They make a merit of implicit faith; and disguise to themselves their real infidelity, by the strongest asseverations and most positive bigotry. (NHR XII, 172)

Herdt argues that for Hume the inability genuinely to assent to religious beliefs is related to the fact that we do not have a direct impression of God (an important conclusion of the *Treatise* and the first *Enquiry*) as well as to what Hume saw as the contradictions within religious belief itself (discussed, e.g., in the *Dialogues*, *The Natural History of Religion*, and implied in the "monkish virtues" passage of the second *Enquiry*). In order to keep these inconsistencies from asserting themselves too strongly, religious beliefs murkily reside in those "shadowy regions" of the mind, shrouded in mysterious vagueness. The sense of mystery that emerges precisely from this vague muddle of exalted ideas produces the pleasurable feeling of awe and wonder, which, by strength of passion confers the *feeling* of conviction notwithstanding the lack of epistemic grounds for such confidence. And as we see from Hume's quote above, the failure to examine these hidden contradictions is then praised as "faith," whereas doubt, i.e., the reasonable state of uncertainty that arises when inconsistencies are detected, is regarded as a prideful attempt to challenge God's inscrutable wisdom (Herdt 1997, 176).[72]

Religious belief not only contains masked contradictions, but Hume thinks that it cannot be consistently lived out. He continues,

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[72] We saw in Chapter One that *The Whole Duty of Man* affirms renouncing reason in this way when it says,

But I told you, humility contained in it not only a submission to his will, but also to his wisdom; that is, to acknowledge him infinitely wise, and therefore that whatever he doth is best and fittest to be done. And this we are to confess both in his commands, and in his disposing and ordering of things. First, whatsoever he commands us either to believe or do, we are to submit to his wisdom in both, to believe whatsoever he bids us believe, how impossible soever it seems to our shallow understandings, and to do whatever he commands us to do, how contrary soever it be to our fleshly reason or humour, and in both to conclude, that his commands are most fit and reasonable, however they appear to us. (II.1.9, 40-41)

> But nature is too hard for all their endeavours, and suffers not the obscure, glimmering light, afforded in those shadowy regions, to equal the strong impressions, made by common sense and by experience. The usual course of men's conduct belies their words, and shows, that their assent in these matters is some unaccountable operation of the mind between disbelief and conviction, but approaching much nearer to the former than to the latter. (NHR XII, 172)

Thus, religious belief is a form not only of irrationality but of self-deception, concealing inconsistencies both within religious belief itself and between avowed religious belief and actual belief (see Herdt 1997, 176).

b. The Dangers of Religious Morality

As mentioned above, Hume thought that the irrational, fear-driven beliefs of the "religionists" had damaging psychological and social consequences. The vague and contradictory nature of religious belief coupled with the way it arises out of and seeks to calm human insecurity makes it particularly prone to the kind of zeal that incites factions and persecutions, disrupting social peace and hindering political advance. The antidote, Hume thinks, is to practice mitigated skepticism and remain within what he regards as the bounds of human experience, which of course is the entire direction of his epistemology.[73]

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[73] One example of where Hume's practical concerns with respect to religion can be seen to motivate his epistemological argumentation is in "Of Miracles" X.1 where he says "Nothing is so convenient as a decisive argument of this kind, which must at least *silence* the most arrogant bigotry and superstition, and free us from their impertinent solicitations. I flatter myself, that I have discovered an argument of a like nature, which, if just, will, with the wise and learned, be an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion, and consequently, will be useful as long as the world endures" (EHU X.1, 110).

I do not mean to suggest, however, that Hume sought or thought it was possible to eradicate "vulgar religion" from the world. Such a view would be inconsistent with his general anti-utopianism, which issues from his clear-sighted awareness of our human propensities (T 3.2.5.9, 334-35; EPM III, 193-95). And although Hume thinks that our propensities to religious belief, being secondary not original, can be transcended, I do not think Hume would expect most people to be capable of doing so (see Yandell 1990, 11-16; Russell 2008, 291). Nevertheless, Hume does seem to hope that improving the human condition by focusing our energies on areas in which we can genuinely advance in knowledge (i.e., by attending to the science of man and the subjects of common life (T 1.4.7.14, 147)), by promoting a secular ethic of humanity that is oriented toward this-worldly happiness, and by improving our material circumstances through engaging in commercial society, we can mitigate some of the fears and

How, then, do Hume's epistemological critiques pertain specifically to His moral critiques of religious and specifically Christian morality, i.e., to those elements of Christian conceptions of how we ought to live that depend upon revelation and tradition yet go beyond what Hume thinks can be ascertained by common experience? Otherwise stated, although Hume thinks that popular religion such as Christianity arose out of and, especially by the "vulgar," is maintained by superstition and enthusiasm,[74] why are these not for the most part harmless when it comes to the moral life?[75] Hume gives at least three reasons: 1) they preclude moral agreement across difference, 2) they divert attention from morality both by superstitious practices and by promoting a lack of concern for this-worldly happiness, and 3) they distort the content of morality. I will consider each in turn.

First, as mentioned above, the specific ways in which Christianity (or revealed religion in general) goes beyond the proper limits of reason renders it especially difficult to resolve conflicts that arise in the moral life between different Christian sects or between Christians and others of different views. This is partly an epistemological issue

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vulnerabilities that prompt those more pernicious forms of religious belief (see Russell 2008, 290-300; Yenor 2006, 405-412). Hume, moreover, seems to think it possible that by emphasizing those shared goods of common life and by showing the insufficiency of reasoning beyond it, religion can become increasingly peripheral to political and social life (see Herdt 1997, 15), at least insofar as his message influences the more educated class of society and in turn slowly shapes European culture more widely (Russell 2008, 296).

[74] See Hume's essay "Of Superstition and Enthusiasm" (ESY 73-79).

[75] I am not sure what Hume would have said about the thoughtful Christians he respected, such as Bishop Butler. As mentioned in footnote #8, Hume did think that religion (albeit his secular notion of the function of religion in the commonwealth) could have beneficial social consequences, though it is not clear whether Hume was being conciliatory in those remarks and, if not, whether he thought the benefits of religion could adequately offset its harms. In any case, his analysis of the negative effects of religion seems to focus on the "vulgar" majority rather than the educated few (though he still does critique the moral lives of certain Christian intellectuals such as Pascal, and this will be discussed in the following chapter). It is reasonable to suppose that Hume's concern regarding the negative effects of religion rises in proportion to the epistemological carelessness of the believers—as well as to the extent to which he thinks their natural passions have been corrupted (this latter point will also be discussed in the subsequent chapter).

insofar as the disputes often arise with respect to disagreements that go beyond common experience, and therefore cannot be settled (see ESY 59). More significantly, however, when the need for security is ultimately driving our religious convictions, we are particularly prone to being combative, defensive, uncompromising, and unsympathetic. Hume remarks that

> For as each sect is positive that its own faith and worship are entirely acceptable to the deity, and as no one can conceive, that the same being should be pleased with different and opposite rites and principles; the several sects fall naturally into animosity, and mutually discharge on each other that sacred zeal and rancour, the most furious and implacable of all human passions. (NHR IX, 161)

Hume's *The History of England* catalogues a range of intolerance, violence, and persecution that Christians have used religion to justify (see Herdt 1997, 188-206; Siebert 1990, 62-135). Hume also discusses the harmful effects of religious belief on society in Section XVI (entitled "Bad Influence of Popular Religions on Morality") of *The Natural History of Religion*. There he observes that

> the greatest crimes have been found, in many instances, compatible with a superstitious piety and devotion: Hence, it is justly regarded as unsafe to draw any certain inference in favour of a man's morals, from the fervor or strictness of his religious exercises, even though he himself believe them sincere. …*Those who undertake the most criminal and most dangerous enterprises are commonly the most superstitious*; as an ancient historian remarks on this occasion. Their devotion and spiritual faith rise with their fears. (NHR XVI, 182)

Second, Hume thinks that religious superstition has the tendency to derail people's attention from morality. It does so in at least two ways: 1) by making superstitious ritual the main focus of the moral life rather than cultivating what Hume regards to be true virtue and 2) by putting forward an other-worldly vision of life (as seen in the doctrine of a "future state") that serves to dull our natural moral responses and to weaken our concern with improving this life. I will consider each in turn.

Regarding the propensity of religion to shift one's attention away from what is morally important and to place too much emphasis on needless ritual, Hume says,

> It is certain, that, in every religion…many of the votaries, perhaps the greatest number, will still seek the divine favour, not by virtue and good morals, which alone can be acceptable to a perfect being, but either by frivolous observances, by intemperate zeal, by rapturous extasies, or by the belief of mysterious and absurd opinions. (NHR XIV, 179)

He continues,

> …if we should suppose…that a popular religion were found, in which it was expressly declared, that nothing but morality could gain the divine favour; if an order of priests were instituted to inculcate this opinion, in daily sermons, and with all the arts of persuasion; yet so inveterate are the people's prejudices, that, for want of some other superstition, they would make the very attendance on these sermons the essentials of religion, rather than place them in virtue and good morals. (NHR XIV, 180)

Hume suggests, then, that religiosity tends to distract us from those virtues that are most worthy of cultivating, regardless of whether or not genuine virtue is promoted within the religious rituals themselves. It is not difficult to imagine, moreover, that when a religious code is emphasized as necessary to right living, sympathy with and benevolence to those who do not follow that code can be neglected.

Hume also maintains that attention from morality was also often diverted by Christianity's doctrine of a "future state" (i.e., an afterlife in which God rewards goodness and punishes evil). Hume's critique here is particularly important because in his day many adherents of revealed and natural religion alike thought that belief in a future state was salutary to society for its role in motivating virtue, especially when our sympathetic awareness of others is stifled by our more selfish tendencies.[76]

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[76] The threat that our selfish tendencies pose to sympathy is a particular problem Hume has to deal with, since he grounds his account of morality in natural sympathy but acknowledges that our sympathy is limited and is often weaker than self-interest. I will be exploring this issue later in the dissertation.

The claim that human beings need the prospect of eternal reward or punishment in order to practice virtue and to avoid vice was a prominent idea in the Calvinist culture of England and Scotland during Hume's lifetime. *The Whole Duty of Man* expresses this idea in its opening lines, where it states that its goal is to teach its readers how to "behave in this world" in order "that they may be happy forever in the next" (Preface, Section I). The prospect of a "future state" was also thought to have motivational impact among prominent philosophers as well. For example, in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, II, xxi John Locke states, "The rewards and punishments of another life, which the Almighty has established as the enforcements of his law, are of weight enough to determine the choice against whatever pleasure or pain this life can show, when the eternal state is considered but in its bare possibility."[77] In *Characteristicks* 2:60, Shaftesbury, despite his disapproval of what he saw as the implicit egoism of such a motive, confesses that "the Principle of *Fear or future Punishment,* and *Hope of future Reward*, how mercenary or servile soever it may be accounted, is yet, in many Circumstances, a great Advantage, Security, and Support to Virtue."

A version of the this view is also seen in Part XII of the *Dialogues* where Cleanthes (the representative of natural religion) argues that corrupt religion is better than no religion, since, as he says,

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[77] See also *The Reasonableness of Christianity* where Locke says, "Before our Saviour's time the doctrine of a future state, though it were not wholly hid, yet it was not clearly known in the world. …How hath this one truth changed the nature of things in the world, and given advantage to piety over all that could tempt or deter men from it? The philosophers, indeed, showed the beauty of virtue; …but leaving her unendowed, very few were willing to espouse her. …But now there being put into the scales, on her side, an exceeding and immortal weight of glory, interest is come about to her, and virtue now is visible to most enriching purchase and by much the best bargain. …The view of heaven and hell will cast a slight upon the short pleasures and pains of the present state, and give attractions and encouragements to virtue which reason and interest and the care of ourselves cannot allow and prefer. Upon this foundation, and upon this only, morality stands firm and may defy all competition" (Locke 2003, 197).

> The doctrine of a future state is so strong and necessary a security to morals, that we never ought to abandon or neglect it. For if finite and temporary rewards and punishments have so great an effect, as we daily find: How much greater must be expected from such as are infinite and eternal? (D XII, 121)[78]

Hume's response to this claim can likely be seen in the rejoinder that Philo (who is regarded by the majority of scholars as most representative of Hume's own views) gives to Cleanthes.

Philo's tactic is to question whether establishing morality on this "religious motive" in fact has the beneficial effect that is claimed for it. Philo says, for instance,

> How happens it then…if vulgar superstition be so salutary to society, that all history abounds so much with accounts of its pernicious consequences on public affairs? Factions, civil wars, persecutions, subversions of government, oppression, slavery; these are the dismal consequences which always attend its prevalency over the minds of men. If the religious spirit be ever mentioned in any historical narration, we are sure to meet afterwards with a detail of the miseries which attend it. (D XII, 122)

In other words, Philo thinks that the hope of future reward seems not to be effectual in motivating virtue, but instead religious belief motivates the kinds of conflicts that are so detrimental to flourishing.

It is unclear to what extent Philo's bitingly polemical view here accurately represents Hume's own perspective. Certainly it seems that religious belief (including hope of future reward) motivates both virtue and vice, and one wonders whether Hume would have been more ready to acknowledge this than Philo. Nevertheless, Philo's position is consistent with what Hume does say in his own voice about the effects of revealed religion (also referred to as "false" or "vulgar" religion) in, for example, *The*

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[78] Hume also places a version of this view in the mouth of the narrator at the end of Section XI of the first *Enquiry*. There the narrator responds to "Epicurus" by contending that those who deny a future state "free men from one restraint upon their passions, and make the infringement of the laws of society, in one respect, more easy and secure" (EHU 147). Hume, however, does not have "Epicurus" respond to this point.

Natural History of Religion, *The History of England*, and certain letters. Moreover, the positive remarks about the effects of revealed religion within Hume's corpus are quite sparse, and even then it is still debatable whether Hume is in earnest or is attempting to appease religious readers. Thus, it does seem that Philo is largely speaking for Hume on this point.

While Hume thought that the pernicious effects of religious belief were caused primarily by revealed religion, not natural religion (also referred to as true, philosophical religion),[79] Philo is, nonetheless, still skeptical of Cleanthes' assertion that the proper office of even true, natural religion is to "regulate the heart of men, humanize their conduct, infuse the spirit of temperance, order, and obedience," with an aim to the happiness of society (D XII, 122). "It is certain, from experience," Philo says,

> …that the smallest grain of natural honesty and benevolence has more effect on men's conduct, than the most pompous views suggested by theological theories and systems. A man's natural inclination works incessantly upon him; it is for ever present to the mind; and mingles itself with every view and consideration: Whereas religious motives, where they act at all, operate only by starts and bounds; and it is scarcely possible for them to become altogether habitual to the mind. (D XII, 123)

Given Hume's own moral philosophy, his psychology as presented in Book II of the *Treatise*, and his discussion of moral motivation in IX of the second *Enquiry* (the latter two of which will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters), there is little doubt that Hume agrees with Philo here as well. For Hume, our more immediate natural inclinations to virtue that arise out of natural sympathy and our desire to be able to

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[79] This is so, first, because adherents of natural religion are centrally concerned with being epistemologically responsible in their belief-formation and are, therefore, less susceptible to superstition and enthusiastic zeal and to the conflicts and intolerance that arise from it. Second, they tend to regard the deity as largely aloof from the affairs of human life. Thus, they do not seek to court God's favor through performing rituals but instead emphasize a reasonable, non-superstitious morality.

approve of our character are what actually provide the source of moral motivation. The "religious motive" is ultimately unnecessary.[80]

Furthermore, Philo argues that, "we must treat of religion, as it has commonly been found in the world" (D XII, 125), and we see here that Philo not only thinks the "religious motive" is ineffectual for promoting virtue but in fact is itself a motive that can lead us to vice insofar as it can foster an other-worldly orientation that in turn neglects genuine human flourishing in this life, the only life we know. (Again, Philo's view is consistent with Hume's moral philosophy and can safely be assumed to express something of Hume's own perspective.[81]) As Philo says,

> …the very diverting of the attention, the raising up a new and frivolous species of merit, the preposterous distribution which it makes of praise and blame, must have the most pernicious consequences, and weaken extremely men's attachment to the natural motives of justice and humanity. (D XII, 124)

I will discuss Philo's claim about the "frivolous species of merit" shortly. For now, however, it is worth dwelling on Philo's point that focusing on the "next life" loosens our natural orientation to morality (i.e., to promoting this-worldly flourishing) by lessening the force that our natural moral sentiments have for us. He maintains,

> The steady attention alone to so important an interest as that of eternal salvation, is apt to extinguish the benevolent affections, and beget a narrow, contracted selfishness. And when such a temper is encouraged, it easily eludes all the general precepts of charity and benevolence. (D XII, 124-125)

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[80] Furthermore, from the standpoint of Hume's moral philosophy, it seems he would affirm along with Shaftesbury and Hutcheson that acting morally for the sake of eternal reward, in fact, instrumentalizes the virtues and in essence makes one a religious egoist. Such a motive would hardly warrant a "pleasing sentiment of approbation" in a disinterested viewer. See Norton's discussion of this issue (1986, 50-52). In contrast to Norton's assessment (and to Hume's treatment of religious motivation in his work), I have indicated in Chapter One and will show more fully in Chapter Six that the focus on eternal reward and punishment as the primary way in which God can factor into moral motivation for religious people seriously misconstrues what is often motivationally significant for sincere religious believers.

[81] See Seibert's (1990) in-depth analysis of Hume's affirmation of "this-worldliness" in Chapter Three, entitled "The Things of This World."

We can imagine that Philo has in mind the way in which focus on the next life can make this life seem insignificant and thereby lead to a dulled sensitivity towards human suffering. He might also be suggesting that there is a self-centered orientation implicit in a person's concern over whether or not she will receive eternal reward or punishment. (Moreover, the Calvinist doctrine of double predestination, which maintains that the unsaved were predestined to damnation before the creation of the world, requires a blunted sympathy from its adherents (such as the Scottish Calvinists of Hume's day) insofar as they are supposed to love and worship as just a God they believe to have pre-ordained many to suffer eternal torment.)

While there is plausibility to Philo's point, it is quite a broad claim, and its truth depends upon many factors, such as whether eternal life is conceived as wholly an external reward or a fulfillment of the joy in goodness already begun in this life, as exclusive or inclusive, as individual or communal. Calvinism tends to answer affirmatively to the former part of each pair. It is therefore no surprise that Hume would be inclined to envision the relationship between the future state and morality to be the version he imbibed growing upon in Calvinist Scotland. In Chapter Six, however, I will argue that Hume's failure to appreciate what I take to be better versions of the way that religion can factor into moral motivation in turn masks a danger in his own secular account. Nevertheless, it is clear that Christianity can divert attention from human flourishing here and now, as Marx and Nietzsche have shown particularly well, and Philo's assessment of the dangers of the "religious motive" is, I think, very important. I will be exploring the significance of Philo's (and Hume's) critique in greater detail in

Chapter Three when I discuss Hume's critique of Christian humility and draw out the broader objections to Christian morality that it implies.

A third way in which Hume thinks that religion is morally harmful is how it can distort the very content of morality itself. As Philo says, it promotes a "frivolous species of merit" whereby inconsequential and even harmful acts are regarded *as good* and sometimes even *morally required* or certain morally unproblematic and even good acts are prohibited.[82] This point harkens to Hume's famous critique of the "monkish virtues" in the second *Enquiry*. There he maintains that a host of Christian practices such as celibacy, fasting, penance, mortification, self-denial, humility, silence, and solitude are merely sham virtues. About them he asks, "are they everywhere rejected by men of sense, but because they serve to no manner of purpose; neither advance a man's fortune in the world, nor render him a more valuable member of society; neither qualify him for the entertainment of company; nor increase his power of self-enjoyment?" (EPM 270). Not only does Hume regard these practices to be frivolous, but he thinks that their very self-depriving, gloomy focus "sours the temper" and "hardens the heart" (EPM 270), thus making them positively harmful. They are neither useful nor agreeable to oneself or to others, and they, in fact, dampen our sentiment of humanity, from which moral distinctions arise in the first place. Therefore, Hume says that we are right to "transfer them to the opposite column, and place them in the catalogue of vices" (EPM 270).

As should be clear, there is a tight connection between Hume's view that aspects of Christian morality are other-worldly and his claim that Christianity warps our conception of morality by making needless practices and vicious behavior seem

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[82] Gaskin regards the prohibition against suicide and contraceptives to be examples of how a contemporary religious perspective (namely, Catholicism) distorts the content of morality by inventing crimes (in addition to praising self-deprecating behavior) (1979, 335).

virtuous. These critiques deserve more analysis than I can provide in this chapter, but they will receive full treatment in the next chapter insofar as they pertain specifically to pride and humility. There I will discuss the ramifications of his reversal and redefinition of the Christian categories of pride and humility insofar as he claims that humility is a "monkish virtue" and that pride is a chief virtue for the moral life.

CHAPTER THREE: HUME'S REHABILITATION OF PRIDE AS A VIRTUE AND
HIS CRITIQUE OF CHRISTIAN HUMILITY

*"A certain degree of generous pride or self-value is so requisite, that the absence of it in
the mind displeases, after the same manner as the want of a nose, eye, or any of the most
material features of the face or members of the body"* (EPM 253)

*"Where the deity is represented as infinitely superior to mankind, this belief…is apt,
when joined with superstitious terrors, to sink the human mind into the lowest
submission and abasement, and to represent the monkish virtues of mortification,
penance, humility, and passive suffering, as the only qualities which are acceptable to
him."* (NHR X, 163)

*"We never excuse the absolute want of spirit and dignity of character, or a proper sense
of what is due to one's self, in society and the common intercourse of life"* (EPM 253).

In the first chapter I showed how pride and humility are conceived within the two

dominant theological traditions in Western Christianity. In the second chapter I

presented Hume's critiques of Christian morality and explained how he attempts to

replace it with his secular conception of morality rooted in social praise and blame. In

this chapter I will explore Hume's reversal and redefinition of the traditional Christian

concepts of pride and humility as part of his project to supplant the Christian moral

vision with a secular one.[1]

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[1] Hume is of course not the first to redefine Christian accounts of pride. Hobbes, for example,
precedes Hume in transferring it from its primary designation as rebellion against God to a purely social
conception. In contrast to Hume, however, Hobbes sees pride as primarily a vicious, vainglorious attempt
to dominate others or to have one's superiority recognized by others (see *Leviathan* I.8.18-19). In this way
pride for Hobbes is, as Christopher Brooke puts it, "[not] an offense against God…[but] against the
equality of our fellow human beings" (2012, xv; see *Leviathan* I.15.21). And since Hobbes saw pride as
one of the two passions (along with fear) that rules human nature, it is a key source of conflict and strife in
social life. Hume, like Hobbes, defines pride socially, accepts that there are vicious forms of pride, and
sees pride as accounting for much rivalry and faction in human community (a topic that I will explore in
the next chapter). Unlike Hobbes, however, he distinguishes vicious pride from virtuous pride and argues
for the latter's importance.
  Mandeville also defines pride primarily in secular terms. Like Hobbes, Mandeville sees pride as a
vice that inevitably motivates much of human action. Mandeville, however, stresses and more fully
explores the positive potential of pride for social life, drawing from Pierre Nicole to show how our
concern for honor and approval for others motivates us to act in accord with moral convention (see Brooke
2012, 155-59). (Hobbes does acknowledge that pride can be motivationally beneficial to the polis (see

To this end, I will first show how Hume conceives of pride as a character trait and why he sees it as an especially significant virtue. I will then explain how he understands humility and why he regards it as a "monkish virtue"—that is, as a useless and even harmful character trait that falsely bears the appearance of virtue only when one's moral outlook is malformed by religious superstition. Finally, I will briefly assess the adequacy of Hume's critique of Christian humility in light of the way humility is actually understood by Christian thinkers. Specifically, I will argue that Hume's portrait of Christian humility does rightly call attention to ways in which Christian humility can

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Leviathan I.14.31; II.28.27), but he places more emphasis on the motivational benefits of fear). Hume, like Mandeville, gives great attention to the ways in which pride inevitably makes us concerned with the perspective of others and therefore becomes a significant component of moral motivation. He nevertheless differs from Mandeville by emphasizing pride's genuine moral value, rather than seeing it as a vice that nevertheless redounds to social benefit.

Thus, while Hume's account of pride draws upon the secular accounts of pride found in Hobbes and Mandeville, he goes beyond these accounts, articulating and defending the importance of good forms of pride. Although Hobbes and Mandeville provide resources for secular reformulations of pride, their dark view of human nature led them to suspect that apparent virtue is a veneer that hides its sordid motivational roots in (vicious) pride or other self-interested passions. (In this way Hobbes and Mandeville bear similarities to the hyper-Augustinians who saw nature as wholly corrupt and un-graced natural "virtue" to mask our deeper selfishness and pride.) The positive aspects of Hume's account of pride are informed, rather, by certain Christian or Deist thinkers who held a more positive view of human nature and heartily affirm the possibility of genuine virtue—e.g., Cudworth, Whichcote, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Butler. These thinkers stress the moral importance of self-respect and positive self-survey (Gill 2006, 14-15), concepts that become central to Hume's articulation of virtuous pride. Hume thus relies upon various traditions to develop his distinctively secular rehabilitation of virtuous pride.

It is also worth noting that Spinoza—that fellow philosopher who deeply challenged religious orthodoxy—may have also influenced Hume's account of pride. Although there is no evidence that Hume read Spinoza directly, Annette Baier has points to abundant circumstantial evidence suggesting that he did (Baier 1993, 238; see also Russell 2008, 72). (See also Russell 2008, 37-39, 46 for evidence that Spinoza's ideas were discussed in Scottish intellectual circles in the first half of the eighteenth century). Baier moreover argues that, not withstanding important differences, Hume's work bears important similarities to Spinoza's (1993). Furthermore, Paul Russell has argued that Hume seems to look favorably upon key aspects of Spinoza as he responds negatively to Samuel Clarke's criticisms of Spinoza (for Clarke's concern to combat Spinoza see 2008, 21, 29-30, 52-53, 227, 229, also 41; for Hume's implicit arguments against Clarke and his alliance with Spinoza, see 33, 41, 46, 53-54, 72-73, 163, 289; see also p. 71 where Russell argues that Hume's epigram on the title page of the *Treatise* is a clear affirmation of the central theme in Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Treatise*). More specifically, Lilli Ananen (2006; see also 2012, 254n18) and Wim Klever (1993) note significant parallels between Spinoza's and Hume's account of the passions. In any case, coincidentally or not, Spinoza distinguishes between extreme pride (*superbia*) and proper pride (*acquiescentia in se ipso*), he sees proper pride as involving accurate self-knowledge whereas extreme pride overestimates its merits, he regards proper pride to be empowering while extreme pride and self-abasement (*abjectio*) denote weakness, and he understands humility to be a vice (Ananen 2012, 243-45, 248). As will be soon clear, Hume's account roughly agrees with these points.

go wrong, especially as it is conceived within the hyper-Augustinian tradition.

Nevertheless, I will show that beneath the different ways of defining pride and humility,

both Hume and many thinkers in the Christian tradition (particularly in the Christian

humanist strand of Western Christianity) affirm the importance of developing a secure,

stable selfhood that involves having a sense of one's genuine worth as well as

appropriate awareness of one's weaknesses. Once this common ground is acknowledged,

we can see that what is centrally at stake between these rival versions of pride and

humility pertains to their differing stances of whether a transcendent moral source is

important for or irrelevant (or even harmful) to developing the sort of security of self

that is, as will be argued, fundamental to human flourishing. Additionally, their different

accounts of pride and humility also are bound up with their rival positions on whether

the notion of God is significant for or largely detrimental to moral formation and, by

extension, for cultivating a healthy or divisive social body. These topics will be taken up

in the remaining chapters.

I. Pride and Humility as Passions

Hume first discusses pride and humility at the beginning of his descriptive

analysis of the passions found in Book II of the *Treatise*. The fact that Hume begins his

examination of the passions with pride and humility, discusses them extensively, and

highlights their influence on a range of other passions (e.g., love and hatred, envy, and

so on), attests to how central Hume thinks they are for an adequate account of human

psychology. While this chapter will primarily focus on the *character traits* rather than

the *passions* of pride and humility, Hume's account of the former depends upon his

account of the latter. Accordingly, before discussing pride as a virtue and humility as a

vice, in this section I will briefly explain how Hume conceives of pride and humility as particular emotions.[2]

Hume describes the passion of pride as a pleasurable impression of oneself,[3] and it arises when—to use Hume's terminology—the 'quality' of the 'subject' of pride (such as character traits, bodily features, external possessions) produces pleasure, and by an association of ideas and impressions, that subject and pleasure are related to oneself (T 2.1.6.1, 190).[4] For example, the pleasure that the pianist takes in her stunning performance produces a sense of pleasure in *herself* for her accomplishment. Hume thinks that pride always involves this double relation between oneself and the pleasurable subject of the pride. I may take delight in the beauty of a waterfall, but that joy does not transfer to pride because the waterfall is unconnected to me. However, "any thing, that gives a pleasant sensation, and is related to self, excites the passion of pride, which is also agreeable, and has self for its object" (T 2.1.5.8, 189). If a person takes pleasure in kindness or wealth and if she is kind or wealthy, then she will likewise be

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[2] Hume's account of the passions of pride and humility will be the primary topic of chapter four. Accordingly, it is there that I will engage more fully with the primary secondary literature on the topic, especially Donald Davidson, Páll Árdal, Annette Baier, Gabriele Taylor, and James King.

[3] This description is, at first glance, problematic since Hume has argued in Book I that there is no impression of the self (T I.4.6.4, 165). I find Páll Árdal's way of reconciling I and II on this point to be persuasive. Árdal observes that in Book I, Hume is dealing with the question of personal identity and, in that context, denies that we have any uniformly identical impression of the self that underlies our changing impressions throughout time. But this does not, Árdal notes, commit Hume to claiming that we have no complex impression of ourselves whatsoever. Rather, if, as seems to be the case, we do have a (composite) impression of ourselves as distinct from what is not ourselves, which *does* change over time as our experiences change, then it is perfectly legitimate for Hume to appeal to such an impression in Book II (1989a, 44-45). Árdal suggests that this complex impression of the self is produced by our passions and concerns, creating a unity within our bundle of perceptions. I do not wish to give detailed textual analysis here, but it is worth pointing out that Jennifer Herdt has argued that Hume does himself distinguish between the two sorts of impressions of the self that Árdal proposes and that while Hume denies the former, he affirms the latter even in Book I (1997, 40-41, see T I.4.6.4, 165 for Hume's explicit distinction between two senses of personal identity). For more on the apparent discrepancy between Hume's account of the self in Book I and II, see: Baier 1991, pp. 129-31; Terrence Penelhum 1976, pp. 9-23, and Jane L. McIntyre, 2000.

[4] In Hume's words, "*all agreeable objects, related to ourselves, by an association of ideas and of impressions, produce pride, and disagreeable ones, humility*" (T 2.1.6.1, 190).

glad about that aspect of herself.[5] Humility, as Hume defines it, is the opposite of pride;

it is an unpleasant impression of the self that arises when one perceives a relation

between oneself and a subject that produces pain.[6] A person may be pained by his

appearance, his slowness of mind, his uncontrollable temper, his place of birth, and

accordingly he feels a similar pain with respect to himself.

Hume does not assign any positive or negative valuation to the passions of pride

and humility as such. This is in part because Book II of the *Treatise* is devoted to a

descriptive and value-neutral analysis of the passions and their operations, and it

therefore does not consider whether these passions are morally admirable or

blameworthy.[7] It is also because no such value judgment could be given in general.

According to Hume's technical definitions of these passions, 'pride' can cover a range of

affirmative emotional stances towards oneself such as a feeling of superiority, basic self-

esteem, or self-satisfaction, and 'humility' can refer to negative affective self-related

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[5] Commentators debate about whether Humean pride depends upon pride's object having value independent of its relation to its possessor. For example, Davidson (1976) and King (1999) argue that the cause of pride must be independently valuable (and therefore dependent on a disinterested social perspective) while Árdal (1989b) and Chazan (1992) argue that it does not. This debate is relevant to some of the issues I will be exploring in the following two chapters, but since I will be better able to deal with it adequately in my more thorough discussion of the passion of pride in chapter four, I will set it aside till then.

[6] Hume may have chosen the term 'humility' instead of 'shame' to designate this particular passion in order to subtly begin to invert the Christian categories of pride and humility. Despite the fact that he assigns neither approbation nor blame to these passions in Book II, that he chooses to call the painful impression of the self 'humility' prepares the ground for him later to disparage it as a character trait. He at least clearly sees in II that the terms pride and humility touch upon a religious nerve, as is indicated by the following passage:

> There may, perhaps, be some, who being accustom'd to the style of the schools and pulpit, and having never consider'd human nature in any other light, than that in which *they* place it, may here be surpriz'd to hear me talk of virtue as exciting pride, which they look upon as a vice; and of vice as producing humility, which they have been taught to consider as a virtue. But not to dispute about words, I observe, that by *pride* I understand that agreeable impression, which arises in the mind, when the view either of our virtue, beauty, riches or power makes us staisfy'd with ourselves: And that by *humility* I mean the opposite impression. (T II.1.7.8, 194)

[7] Hume says that he seeks to "examine these impressions [i.e., pride and humility], consider'd in themselves; and enquire into their causes, whether plac'd on the mind or body, without troubling ourselves at present with that merit or blame, which may attend them" (T II.1.7.8, 194-95).

attitudes such as a feeling of inferiority, insecurity in one's being, or shame in oneself. Whether these passions should be evaluated as morally admirable or vicious depends upon the context in which they arise and whether they proceed from admirable or odious states of character. For example, we think that the passion of pride warrants approval when it consists in feeling one's genuine dignity but disapproval when it arises upon bullying another person. Likewise we think that the passion of humility warrants approval when one feels appropriate shame in vice but that it warrants disapproval, for instance, when it arises from fixating on minor flaws in one's appearance.[8] As Hume notes, "'Tis evident [pride] is not always vicious, nor [humility] virtuous" (T II.2.1.8, 194-5).

Thus, when Hume speaks of the *virtue* of pride and the *vice* of humility, he is not speaking of passions but of 'qualities of mind' or character traits. Character traits, in contrast to passions, are stable dispositions to feel and to act in certain ways. It seems that character traits inevitably come under scrutiny from the general view, since we cannot help but judge whether qualities of character are useful or agreeable to oneself or to others. Indeed, Hume seems to regard character traits as the primary target of moral evaluation, for passions and actions can only be assessed as virtuous or vicious when they are judged to be appropriate to the situation or when they arise out of and so reveal the nature of a person's character. With respect to action, Hume says,

> If any action be either virtuous or vicious, 'tis only as a sign of some quality or character. It must depend upon durable principles of the mind, which extend over the whole conduct, and enter into personal character. Actions themselves, not proceeding from any constant principle, have no influence on love or hatred ... and consequently are never consider'd in morality. (T III.3.1.4, 367)

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[8] See Manzer's discussion of the positive role shame/humility plays in Hume's account of moral development (1996, 340-41).

As I will soon explain, virtuous pride as a character trait, for Hume, is the tendency to have due esteem for oneself (to feel appropriate passions of pride), whereas humility is the tendency to feel that one is less valuable than one is (to feel the passion of humility to excess). It is thus clear that while the passions of pride and humility are not in and of themselves virtuous or vicious, they are related to the virtue of pride and vice of humility insofar as they express these underlying qualities of mind. It is the character traits that will be the focus for the remainder of this chapter. Specifically, in what follows I will explore how Hume conceives of the character traits of pride and humility as well as why Hume thinks that pride is so important and humility so detrimental to a flourishing life.

II. The Virtue of Pride

a. Pride as a Virtue

Hume discusses the virtue of pride in Book III of the *Treatise* in the second section entitled "Of greatness of mind" and in Book VII of the second *Enquiry*. He describes pride as merited self-value (T 3.3.2.8, 381), well-founded self-esteem (T 3.3.2.11, 382), and a feeling of dignity or "dignity of character" (T 3.3.2.12, EPM VII, 252).[9] The significance of this character trait for Hume is immediately indicated by the fact that in the *Treatise* he places pride as the first of the 'natural virtues' (i.e., those virtues founded upon inherent features of human nature), a placement that signals his

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[9] Although there is much overlap in Hume's accounts of pride in the *Treatise* and the second *Enquiry*, and although the two accounts are wholly compatible, Jacqueline Taylor points out that Hume places a greater emphasis on dignity in the second *Enquiry* (2012, 38-47). While in the *Treatise* the virtue of pride can refer to appropriate pride in one's beauty, social status, or material possessions as well as in one's virtue, Taylor argues that Hume's shift to the language of dignity in the *Enquiry* enables him more clearly to emphasize the praiseworthiness of pride in one's personal merit over those other things of which a person might be proud. This is because pride in one's character is able to safeguard one's dignity whereas pride in wealth and other contingent goods cannot (2012, 44). I will explain why Hume is particularly concerned to stress that virtue is the deepest source of pride, and why it is central to his understanding of what is entailed in possessing pride as a virtue, in section *II.c*.

radical break from Christian morality and its condemnation of pride,[10] as well as his sense of the importance of pride for human happiness. This placement also reflects, as I will argue, the primacy of pride for Hume's secular moral system as a whole insofar as pride, for Hume, both enables the kind of extensive sympathy needed for moral discernment and serves as the ultimate source of moral motivation. In this section I will present Hume's account of the virtue of pride, explain why he regards it as a virtue, and argue for its importance in Hume's immanently-derived account of ethics.

Before Hume discusses the virtue of pride, he takes pains to distinguish it from "an excessive pride or over-weaning conceit of ourselves," which we often call pride but which "is always esteem'd vicious, and is universally hated" (T 3.3.2, 378). Excessive pride does not refer to too much pride so much as an unjustified pride that lacks due proportion to one's true merit. Hume in fact uses "over-weaning conceit" and "ill-grounded conceit" interchangeably, indicating that pride is excessive precisely when it is unmerited. If one merits much, however, Hume deems a high degree of pride to be warranted.

Hume thinks that conceit invites disapprobation primarily because it offends the pride of others. Since "…we are, all of us, proud in some degree…" (T 3.3.2.7, 380), we

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[10] On this point, Annette Baier remarks, "This is to some extent just part of Hume's Christian-baiting. He can't resist the opportunity, not just to transfer the monkish vices to the column of the virtues, but to give the first of the natural virtues he treats in detail the name of the first cardinal sin" (1991, 207). Hume is explicit about countering the Christian tradition in the *Treatise*, though he remains somewhat veiled at the end of this passage:

> Accordingly we find, that many religious declaimers decry those [heroic] virtues [which essentially depend upon pride] as purely pagan and natural, and represent to us the excellency of the *Christian* religion, which places humility in the rank of virtues, and corrects the judgment of the world, and even of philosophers, who so generally admire all the efforts of pride and ambition. Whether this virtue of humility has been rightly understood, I shall not pretend to determine. I am content with the concession, that the world naturally esteems a well-regulated pride, which secretly animates our conduct, without breaking out into such indecent expressions of vanity, as may offend the vanity of others. (T 3.3.2.13, 382-83)

In the second *Enquiry*, however, Hume directly rebukes humility (and openly criticizes its religious connections) when he calls it a monkish virtue.

are prone to compare ourselves with others (T 3.3.2.4, 379).[11] When we show up as inferior, however, we are liable to experience that disagreeable passion of humility. Although public expressions of any kind of pride, whether well-founded or excessive, can elicit humility in others by virtue of comparison, usually the humility caused by an awareness of another's self-approval of her gifts evokes respect and esteem rather than envy or hatred (T.3.3.2.6, 380). By contrast, ill-founded pride invites only the disapproval of others. This is because the humility we may feel in the presence of another's conceit does not transfer to respect when we judge that the pride lacks adequate grounds (see T.3.3.2.6, 380). Therefore if by pride one means an over-weaning conceit of ourselves, it "must be vicious; since it causes uneasiness in all men, and presents them every moment with a disagreeable comparison" (T 3.3.2, 380).[12]

While Hume observes that excessive pride receives disapprobation, he says that "nothing can be more laudable, than to have a value for ourselves, where we really have qualities that are valuable" (T 3.3.2.8, 381), so long as this self-approval is properly concealed and regulated by social grace (T 3.3.2.9, 381). Correspondingly, he maintains that "[w]e never excuse the absolute want of spirit and dignity of character, or a proper sense of what is due to one's self, in society and the common intercourse of life" (EPM 253). On Hume's account, then, the virtue of pride is the tendency to feel the passion of

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[11] Hume says, "We judge more of objects by comparison, than by their intrinsic worth and value; and regard every thing as mean, when set in opposition to what is superior of the same kind. *But no comparison is more obvious than that with ourselves; and hence it is that on all occasions it takes place, and mixes with most of our passions*" (T 3.3.2.4, 379, emphasis mine).

[12] Hume also observes, "We have, all of us, a wonderful partiality for ourselves, and were we always to give vent to our sentiments in this particular, we shou'd mutually cause the greatest indignation in each other, not only by the immediate presence of so disagreeable a subject of comparison, but also by the contrariety of our judgments" (T 3.3.2.10, 381). Notice that in Hume's assessment overweaning conceit is primarily vicious because of its effects on others, but, in contrast to the key Christian thinkers that were discussed in Chapter One, Hume seemingly does not take very seriously the harm that conceit has for the conceited person herself. In any case, he thinks that "'twou'd be more advantageous to over-rate our merit, than to form ideas of it, below its just standard" (T 3.3.2.8, 381).

pride in proportion to genuine merit (T 3.3.2.1, 378; T 3.3.2.8, 381). The person with this virtue would therefore feel the passion of pride in the right things (i.e., to those aspects of oneself that are genuinely praiseworthy), in the right proportion to their value, and in the right context, as would be affirmed by the 'general view.'[13]

Later in this chapter and in the remaining chapters I will attempt to fill out more of what Hume suggests virtuous pride might look like. For now I will point out that we can assess whether a person's passions of pride tend to be appropriate (and are, therefore, indicative of virtuous pride) by examining the component parts of their grounds: the subject, quality, and relation to the self. Although Hume does not develop this point explicitly, it is implicit in his account of how the passion of pride arises, and his later references to vicious sorts of pride depend upon pride going wrong in one or more of these ways.

First, then, we may misconstrue the *subject* of our pride. Don Quixote does this when he takes pride in being dubbed knight (the subject of his pride) by the innkeeper whom he believes to be the lord of the castle. We likewise see this in the adolescent who takes pride in the remarkable artist that she supposes she will one day be, despite her minimal talent. In both of these cases the subject of the pride exists only in fantasy. The subject of pride can also be misconstrued when a person fails to grasp its true nature. Imagine, for example, someone taking pride in being a "free spirit" when the character

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[13] As I will later show in *II.c.*, Hume regards due pride to be merited above all by virtue, and accordingly the virtuously proud take pride most especially in their strength of character above those others things (e.g., beauty, wealth, talents, and status) of which a person might be proud. While this much is clear with respect to Hume's convictions about what most warrants pride, in Chapter Five I will discuss some of the difficulties of fleshing out what should count as merited pride when taking the "general view or survey."

trait upon which the pride is (wrongly) based is, in fact, the undisciplined reign of her immediate impulses.

More commonly, we may overrate the *quality* of the subject and thus take a disproportionate pride in it (e.g., a person may think that her athletic ability or her fashionable clothes to be of more value than they in fact are). Or we may mistake the quality altogether. The young Augustine does this when he feels pride in stealing pears (C II). In his case he falsely regards the subject of his pride (the action of stealing pears and the feeling of freedom from constraints that it implies) as having some sort of positive value that it in truth lacks.[14]

Finally, we can feel a false or excessive pride on the basis of an inadequate *relation* between the subject and oneself. Hume offers two examples of this sort of insufficiently grounded pride. First, he considers the person who boasts of being present at a great feast (T 2.1.6.2, 190). Here the person's relation to the feast is very small (let us assume that he is in no way was responsible for the feast or necessary for the merry-making of the party). While Hume suggests that the master who hosted the feast may be justly proud of it, the guest's pride exceeds its warranted bounds.[15] Second, Hume

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[14] Augustine would have had to regard stealing as bad in order to get the thrill and pride over having the gumption to do it. Perhaps then it is better to say that Augustine takes pride in the feeling of power rather than the stealing itself (i.e., stealing is the means to expressing power and is not valued for its own sake—especially since he admits that he did not want the pears). Since power is a good if appreciated and used rightly, perhaps Augustine's example is best interpreted, like the other examples above, as a disordered value and hence a disordered pride. In any case, the point remains that much of improper pride will depend upon being mistaken in some way with respect to the quality of the subject of pride. (Hume suggests what rightly- and wrongly-ordered values might look like in the 'sensible knave' passage at the end of the second *Enquiry*. I will discuss this passage later in this section.)

[15] As Gabriele Taylor points out, Hume's example in this case is problematically ambiguous as to whether the joy taken in the object (the feast) *can* cause pride and when it *justifiably* causes pride (1980, 388). Taylor argues that Hume seems to want to account for the conditions for the latter (and not only in this example but in the examples given when he discusses other conditions for the arousal of pride (T 2.1.6, 190-2)), since Hume acknowledges that a guest *can* take pride in the feast but clearly thinks he is very silly to do so. She argues, however, that Hume cannot actually make sense of when pride is warranted as long as he takes a "wholly external or objective view of the situation…[and] completely ignores the

mentions the person who feels pride in resembling the appearance, air, or some other

trivial feature of a great man (T 2.1.9.3, 198). In this case there is a relation (the

resemblance), but the resemblance, being irrelevant to what makes the great man

praiseworthy, is not the sort that merits pride.

Certainly there are other ways that our pride can be inadequately grounded and

thus excessive. Indeed, in the next chapter I will develop further ways in which Hume

suggests that we can manifest vicious pride, particularly in relation to social perception.

(I will also be enriching Hume's account by drawing from other sources, since there my

concern will shift from articulating what *Hume* thinks about pride to examining the

nature of pride and its relation to flourishing.) For now, however, I assume that enough

has been said in order to give a sense of what Hume might regard as virtuous pride and

pride that goes beyond its just bounds.

Why specifically does Hume think merited pride warrants approbation and,

hence, is virtuous? In the *Treatise* Hume stresses its usefulness to ourselves, asserting

that "nothing is more useful to us in the conduct of life, than a due degree of pride" (T

3.3.2.8, 381), therefore suggesting that its utility cannot be over-emphasized. This is so

because by making "us sensible of our own merit, [it] gives us a confidence and

assurances in all our projects and enterprises" (T 3.3.2.8, 381). A good opinion of

ourselves empowers us to act boldly (T 3.3.2, 381) and to aspire to great things.

Furthermore, the virtue of pride itself can motivate further virtue, insofar as the proud

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relevant beliefs of the agent himself" (388). It does seem to me that Hume, when he is being consistent,
does take an external view of things as part of his project of providing a science of human nature. One of
the crucial ways this shows up is in the way he talks about the 'pleasure' we take in the subject of pride
rather than saying that we regard the subject as valuable. I think that this is a crucial problem for Hume, as
I will argue in the Chapter Four and Five.

person regards it as beneath her dignity to act viciously.[16] Hume does observe that excessive pride can destroy utility by making us prejudicial (T 3.3.2.14, 383), and presumably it also weakens our ability to make sound practical judgments with respect to what we can realistically accomplish. Nonetheless, the general usefulness of pride leads him to assert that it is more advantageous to overrate rather than underestimate our merits (T 3.3.2.8, 381).

More fundamental than its utility, however, Hume thinks that well-grounded pride is virtuous because when surveyed it "gives us immediate satisfaction" (T 3.3.2.14, 383). In the second *Enquiry* Hume de-emphasizes pride's usefulness and classifies pride under the section entitled "Of Qualities Immediately Agreeable to Ourselves." The force of this classification is to insist that pride is worthy of esteem for its own sake and is not reducible to its instrumental value.[17] To show this Hume asks, "Who is not struck with any signal instances of greatness of mind or dignity of character; with elevation of sentiment, disdain of slavery, and with that noble pride and spirit, which arises from conscious virtue?" (EPM 252). Even if pride counters utility, as when it leads a person into dangers and difficulties or prompts nations to destroy other nations, "when we fix our view on the person himself, who is the author of all this mischief, there is something so dazzling in his character, the mere contemplation of it so elevates the mind, that we cannot refuse it our admiration" (T 3.3.2.15, 383). Pride accounts for whatever "we call *great* in human affections" (T 3.3.3.1, 384; T 3.3.2.13, 382) and is immediately agreeable as such.

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[16] This will be explained in detail in *II.c*.

[17] See Marie Martin on this point (1992, 392-93).

By rehabilitating pride as a virtue Hume signals his departure from the Christian tradition, most particularly the hyper-Augustinian strand of which Scottish Calvinism is an expression. As was explained in the first chapter, hyper-Augustinians regard human nature to be wholly corrupt, and they therefore tend to view much of ordinary human desire—desire which comes out of our depraved nature—with suspicion. From this perspective, our natural desire for pride and esteem is itself sinful insofar as it is egocentric, unwarranted given our wretched state, and lacking in due gratitude to God's grace for whatever good that we do have. Pride is, furthermore, not only problematic in itself, but it also contaminates virtue if we are too pleased with our goodness.[18] In contrast to the hyper-Augustinian attitude towards pride, however, Hume sees our desire for esteem as both inescapable and even important for motivating moral growth (a point I will develop later in this chapter and in chapter five). Moreover, the pleasure of feeling merited pride is, Hume thinks, praiseworthy, not a condemnable worldly pleasure.[19] Hume's appreciation of pride thus is consistent with the general tendency of his moral philosophy to be in accord with much of our strong desires and to promote ordinary human happiness that follows upon the fulfillment of them, over and against the

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[18] As we saw in chapter one, this expressed in *The Whole Duty of Man* when it says that we need humility "to keep us from any high conceits of our performances, which if we once entertain, it will blast the best of them, and make them utterly unacceptable to God" (II.1.4, 35-36). This is because, "The best of our works are so full of infirmary and pollution, that if we compare them with that perfection and purity which is in God, we may truly say with the *prophet, All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, Isaiah 64.6.* and therefore to pride ourselves in them, is the same madness, that it would be in a beggar to brag of his apparel, when it is nothing but vile rags and tatters…" (II.1.4, 36).

[19] As Baier puts it, Hume insists that "the qualities picked out as virtues be ones that human nature regularly does turn up. … One constraint that Hume imposes on the moral point of view is that it be non-Utopian, that it find value in the available human material. It looks for what is better in us, and so any practicability its findings have will depend on appeal to those better actual tendencies" (1991, 187).

Calvinist tendency to express contempt for this world and to insist that humans are depraved and incapable of goodness apart from grace.[20]

Another way in which Hume's rehabilitation of pride breaks with the Christian tradition is in his emphasis on human self-sufficiency that is implied by making religion peripheral to his philosophy of common life. While Christian thinkers differ with respect to the specific ways in which we are dependent on God (e.g., the extent to which we are dependent on grace), they are united in affirming that our dependence is significant insofar as God is seen as the originator and sustainer of life, the fulfillment of our deepest longings, and the ultimate source of goodness, truth, and beauty. Thus, Hume's attempt to render religion irrelevant to and unnecessary for common life and his description of our human capacity for virtue with no place given to a Providential bestowal of those capacities, or of grace cooperating with them, would have been seen as vicious pride, as a project that arrogantly overreaches its just bounds.[21] Hume, however,

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[20] The following is perhaps Hume's best statement on the centrality of happiness to his account of morality:

> But what philosophical truths can be more advantageous to society, than those here delivered, which represent virtue in all her genuine and most engaging charms, and make us approach her with ease, familiarity, and affection? The dismal dress falls off, with which many divines, and some philosophers, have covered her; and nothing appears but gentleness, humanity, beneficence, affability; nay, even at proper intervals, play, frolic, and gaiety. She talks not of useless austerities and rigours, suffering and self-denial. She declares that her sole purpose is to make her votaries and all mankind, during every instant of their existence, if possible, cheerful and happy; nor does she ever willingly part with any pleasure but in hopes of ample compensation in some other period of their lives… And if any austere pretenders approach her, enemies to joy and pleasure, she either rejects them as hypocrites and deceivers; or, if she admit them in her train, they are ranked, however, among the least favoured of her votaries. (EPM IX.II, 279-80)

[21] Hume's embrace of the human self-sufficiency for living a good and happy life is existentially manifest by the calm and cheerful manner in which he faced his own death and when he reviews, with satisfaction, his own life (see Hume's "My Own Life" (ESY xxxi-xli), an essay he wrote within a year of his death, as well as the testimony of his friends James Boswell and Adam Smith and his doctor Joseph Black (see Baier 2008, 101-2)). This is noteworthy, as Donald Seibert (1990, 206-10), Mossner (1970, 591), and others have pointed out, since many religious readers were curious as to how the great religious skeptic would die. Any who sought a sign of remorse, vulnerability, doubt in his religious antipathy, or expression of dissatisfaction with life so as to vindicate their religious worldview would have, however, been disappointed. Also relevant and worth mentioning here is Seibert's sensitive analysis of how Hume manifests virtuous pride in "My Own Life" (1990, 197-200), Ryan Hanley's discussion of the self-

turns the table on the Christian tradition, indicating that it is the adherents of revealed

religion who actually possess vicious pride insofar as they reach beyond the limits of

human knowledge and assert far more than our meager human minds can genuinely

understand.[22] Nevertheless, although Hume implicitly charges the Christian tradition

with lacking due humility in this respect, his emphasis is on pride, on attending to what

humans *can* do and discover by our own lights and achieve through our own power. One

feels Hume's excitement at the potential of developing a science of man, where attention

to the human rather than the divine takes center stage in thought and practical life.

Since Hume places pride under the heading "Of greatness of mind" in the

Treatise, emphasizes a "generous" and "noble" pride in the second *Enquiry*, and

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sufficiency that Hume expresses and holds up for his readers to emulate in his recounting of how he rose above adversity and acquired fame, wealth, and (as is implicit in the telling) virtue, and Baier's reflection upon Hume's reading of Lucian as he awaited death (see "Hume's Deathbed Reading," 2008, 100-10).

We can compare Hume's implicit affirmation of human self-sufficiency with the Calvinist religious culture of eighteenth century Scotland, which would have been informed by the following sorts of claims that Jean Calvin makes in the *Institutes*:

> Owing to the innate self-love by which all are blinded, we most willingly persuade ourselves that we do not possess a single quality which is deserving of hatred; and hence, independent of any countenance from without, *general credit is given to the very foolish idea, that man is perfectly sufficient of himself for all the purposes of a good and happy life*. If any are disposed to think more modestly, and concede somewhat to God, that they may not seem to arrogate every thing as their own, still, in making the division, they apportion matters so, that the chief ground of confidence and boasting always remains with themselves. Then, if a discourse is pronounced which flatters the pride spontaneously springing up in man's inmost heart, nothing seems more delightful. (ICR II.1.2, 148, emphasis mine)

See also where Calvin says, "The philosophers who have contended most strongly that virtue is to be desired on her own account [as is implied by Hume's account of the natural virtues], were so inflated with arrogance as to make it apparent that they sought virtue for no other reason than as a ground for indulging in pride" (ICR III.7.2, 450). The self-sufficiency that Hume takes to be part of virtuous pride is seen from Calvin's perspective as vicious pride, a vice of particular gravity.

[22] That Hume indeed sees assertions, which reach beyond what he regards as the limits of human knowledge to manifest vicious or excessive pride is clear, for example, when he says,

> if any of the learned be inclined, from their natural temper, to haughtiness and obstinacy, a small tincture of Pyrrhonism might abate their pride, by showing them, that the few advantages, which they may have attained over their fellows, are but inconsiderable, if compared with the universal perplexity and confusion, which is inherent in human nature" (EHU XII.3, 161).

It is also evident in "Of Miracles" X.1, where Hume says,

> Nothing is so convenient as a decisive argument of this kind, which must at least *silence* the most arrogant bigotry and superstition, and free us from their impertinent solicitations. I flatter myself, that I have discovered an argument of a like nature, which, if just, will, with the wise and learned, be an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion, and consequently, will be useful as long as the world endures" (EHU X.1, 110).

discusses pride in relation to the heroic virtues like "courage, intrepidity, ambition, love of glory, magnanimity, and all the other shining virtues of that kind" (T 3.3.2.13, 382),[23] we might wonder whether, for Hume, pride is genuinely merited by and hence only a virtue in truly great individuals. This supposition seems to gain further support in light of Hume's claim in Book II of the *Treatise* that because of our tendency to compare ourselves with others, our ability to feel the passion of pride depends upon the rarity of pride's object (T 2.1.6.4-5, 191; see also Baier 1991, 207 and Gill 2006, 244). If merited pride requires us to have qualities that few possess, then it would seem that the pride an average person takes in her more ordinary attributes would be inadequately grounded and hence vicious.

There is further textual evidence, however, that supports interpreting Hume as considering pride to be a virtue that ordinary persons are capable of possessing, even if to a lesser degree. First, for Hume virtue is the "most obvious" cause of pride (T 2.1.7.2, 193),[24] and he is very generous in what he allows in his catalogue of virtues. Among his list of natural virtues are not only the virtues of greatness (T 3.3.2, 378-84) but also of goodness and benevolence (T 3.3.3, 384-86) and of natural abilities (T 3.3.4, 387-91),

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[23] Hume even suggests that pride may be equivalent to these heroic virtues, or, at the very least, is necessary to those virtues:

> In general we may observe, that whatever we call *heroic virtue*, and admire under the character of greatness and elevation of mind, is either nothing but a steady and well-establish'd pride and self-esteem, or partakes largely of that passion. Courage, intrepidity, ambition, love of glory, magnanimity, and all the other shining virtues of that kind, have plainly a strong mixture of self-esteem in them, and derive a great part of their merit from that origin. (T 3.3.2.13, 382)

Hume reiterates this connection between pride and the heroic virtues in the second *Enquiry*, adding that "undisturbed philosophical tranquility, superior to pain, sorrow, anxiety, and each assault of adverse fortune" (EPM 256) to his list of virtues made possible by possessing dignity of spirit.

[24] Virtue is a standard example of causes of pride mentioned in the *Treatise*. See, for example, T 2.1.2.5, 183; T 2.1.5.2-3, 187; T 2.1.7, 193-95; T 2.1.11.1, 206; T 2.2.2.9, 218.

many virtues of which are more commonplace.[25] While Hume surely would think that those who manifest true nobility of spirit merit *more* pride than ordinary characters, still it seems that on Hume's view common virtue merits its own just proportion of pride, and it is appropriate for the ordinary person to feel a due sense of self-dignity. Hume says that we never excuse utter lack of pride or dignity in a person and, indeed, that "a certain degree of generous pride or self-value is so requisite, that the absence of it in the mind displeases, after the same manner as the want of a nose, eye, or any of the most material features of the face or members of the body" (EPM 253), indicating that a proper sense of pride could, in principle, be possessed by all. Second, in the *Treatise* Hume first looks at pride as it is found in "common life" (T 3.3.2.11, 382) before moving onto historical examples and a discussion of pride's role in the heroic virtues. Third, Hume discusses pride as is suitable to a person's rank (T 3.3.2.11, 382), therefore suggesting that while different levels of pride are suitable to different stations, some form of pride is nevertheless fitting no matter what opportunities one has or has not been given.

Moreover, although Book II emphasizes the rarity of the object for producing the passion of pride, Baier argues that this condition is dropped in Hume's discussion of pride as a virtue (1991, 207), noting that in Book III Hume says that

> those, who have an ill-grounded conceit of themselves, are for ever making those comparisons, nor have they any other method of supporting their vanity. [Whereas a] man of sense and merit is pleas'd with himself, independent of all foreign considerations: But a fool must always find some person, that is more foolish, in order to keep himself in good humour with his own parts and understanding. (T 3.3.2.7, 380)

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[25] Examples of virtues that Hume discusses, which are found in ordinary persons are gratitude and friendship (T 3.3.3.3, 385), good sense and humor (T. 608), patience and constancy (T. 610-11), to name but a few.

Baier interprets Hume to mean that virtuous pride is not based on having what others

lack but on having "real and intrinsic merit" (T. 2.1.6.4, 191) regardless of how widely

spread these merits are (1991, 207-8). Baier notes that these standards of worthiness that

regulate our pride are dependent upon our participation in social life, for through it we

come to discern what can be expected from different people and what are reasonable

aims given the sorts of beings that we are (1991, 208). I take this to indicate that Baier

does think that comparisons are still operative when acquiring virtuous pride, since it is

largely through the comparisons we make in social life that we discern these sorts of

standards that ought to govern our pride. But nevertheless, these standards are not so

rigid that only the best can feel their own value or that recognition of one's weaknesses

precludes a general sense of one's worth or the proper appreciation of one's relative

strengths (1991, 206-7). (I discuss the role of comparison in vicious and virtuous forms

of pride further in the next chapter.)[26]

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[26] Michael Gill interprets Baier as claiming that Hume regards vicious pride to be comparative and virtuous pride to be non-comparative (2006, 327n15). Given Baier's sensitivity to the crucial role that social life plays in informing our standards of what is worthy of pride in different contexts, I am not convinced that she would maintain that there is *no* comparison at work in virtuous pride. If she is arguing for such an interpretation, however, I part ways with Baier and side with Gill in thinking that all pride for Hume has a comparative element. In the next chapter I argue in fact that comparison is essential to virtuous pride insofar as virtuous pride must be proportionate to its mark, and thus is dependent upon knowing where one's merits stand in relation to others—on knowing, for example, when one's achievements are good (and worthy of a relative pride) but not excellent.

I do think, however, that Gill gives too much weight to the rarity requirement in Book II and correspondingly seems not to allow for gradations of pride. Although I think Baier states it too strongly when she says that Hume "lifts" the rarity requirement on his "moralized form" of pride given in Book III (1991, 2007), Hume does indeed seem to soften it—a point that Gill does not sufficiently acknowledge. There are two reasons why I think that Hume was right to deemphasize the rarity criteria in his discussion of virtuous pride. First, it better fits the phenomena. For instance, the working mother's pride in finishing her degree is proper even though she was not at the top of her class, nor was she the only adult student to finish a program without overcoming sufficient obstacles. Her pride would be excessive if, for instance, she regarded herself to be a genius or falsely saw her obstacles as being larger than those of the other adults in her cohort. But nevertheless a high degree of rarity is not necessary for her to have just pride in her accomplishment, provided her pride is proportionate to her merits. I do acknowledge that if it were commonplace for working parents to get their degrees, her pride would, though present, naturally be somewhat dimmed. Even here, though, a due degree pride in her work done would not be misplaced; she is not barred from pride because this sort of achievement is widespread. Second, I think that there is an

Baier's point here suggests a further important facet of Hume's account of pride—one that will be significant to the following two chapters—namely, that virtuous pride includes having a secure, stable selfhood, one that does not quickly feel worthless by comparisons with others. Because we all have a desire to approve of ourselves (to feel the passion of pride regularly and to have a persistent, underlying self-esteem), Hume notices that those without sufficient grounds for self-approval seek to generate pride by comparing themselves to others that they perceive as inferior. In this way, excessive or unwarranted pride arguably masks a basic insecurity of self.

That unwarranted pride often hides insecurity is further suggested by the way Hume links excessive pride with vanity. Vanity, he says "seems to consist chiefly in such an intemperate display of our advantages, honours, and accomplishments; in such an inopportune and open demand of praise and admiration" (EPM 266). While vanity initially appears to involve thinking too highly of oneself insofar as the vain person deems her attributes to be worthy of being the constant object of others' attention, Hume points out that it is in fact "a sure symptom of the want of true dignity and elevation of mind" (EPM 266). This is so because without a just basis for pride, the viciously proud or vain person needs to be better than others or to be inordinately affirmed in order to prop up her self-esteem. Hume observes that "a fool [referring to those with excessive pride] must always find some person, that is more foolish, in order to keep himself in good humour with his own parts and understanding" (T 3.3.2.7, 380). By contrast, for the virtuously proud person, comparisons in which one shows up inferior to others

important difference between the spirit and character of the comparisons made by the conceited and virtuously proud person, as I will argue in the next chapter. It thus will not be until there that my full account of how, on the one hand, comparisons are always at work in Humean pride but, on the other hand, that Hume (and Baier) point to something significant when they stress that the viciously proud are heavily dependent on comparisons in a way that the virtuously proud are not.

would not automatically undermine her sense of self-value, since her pride is founded on what she does merit and on the valuable contributions she makes to others, even if she is not the best or if her talents are not perpetually recognized by those around her.

Thus far I have presented Hume's account of virtuous pride and argued that he (I think rightly) regards due pride is available and appropriate to normal human beings, providing the basic security that allows us to relate well to others. I will next explain how pride plays a significant role in Hume's moral philosophy in the following two respects: First, proper self-esteem is important for developing a wider, more extensive sympathy, which, as was explained in the last chapter, is the very source of moral distinctions. Since sympathy is essential for determining *what* is genuinely praiseworthy and blameworthy and for giving an account of *why* this is the case, then if proper pride is important for sympathy, it is also important for moral knowledge. Second, pride is critical to Hume's secular account of moral motivation, and hence plays a crucial role in answering the question of why we should desire to be moral, especially in those instances where virtue is particularly difficult and seemingly unrewarding.

b. Pride and Sympathy

I will begin by explaining the role that pride plays in sympathy. Hume's initial account of sympathy is given in Book II of the *Treatise*, wherein he aims to explain the formation and operation of the passions as part of his project to provide a new science of human nature. Sympathy as he there describes it is passive and automatic, and, as I will make clear in the next chapter, it does more to illuminate the nature of group bias than it does to explain how sympathy is the source of our moral distinctions. Hume, however, further refines and develops his initial description of sympathy to account for variations

of sympathy throughout Book II,[27] and by the time he argues that sympathy serves as the basis of common language of praise and blame in Book III, it is arguably a wider, more extensive sympathy that he has in mind. In this section I want to show just why virtuous pride is important for enabling this shift to a more active, extensive sympathy and, by extension, why pride is therefore important for our ability to make sound moral judgments in the first place.

In Hume's initial account of sympathy in Book II of the *Treatise,* he describes the process by which sentiments are transferred between persons as follows: First, external signs such as one's countenance or verbal expressions communicate to the sympathizer an idea of her sentiments. Then, by an association of impressions and ideas, the idea of the other's sentiment tacitly calls to mind the sympathizer's own experiences of that sentiment. Finally, this idea is "converted into an impression" in the sympathizer and moreover "acquires such a degree of force and vivacity, as to become the very passion itself, and produce an equal emotion, as any original affection" (T 2.1.11.3, 206).[28] For example, if a person that we pass on the street cries out in distress of some sort, her cry evokes distress in us such that we feel something of what she feels. Notice that Hume's account here implies that this sort of sympathy just happens to us. It does not actively involve agency; rather, receiving an impression of another sets sympathy in motion by the natural association of impressions and ideas. Hume uses this account of

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[27] See Chapter Two of Herdt 1997, especially pp. 39-49, for a detailed discussion of the development of Hume's account of sympathy in Book II of the *Treatise*. See also pp. 60-81 for the relationship between sympathy and moral approbation in Hume's moral philosophy, as well as for the relationship between sympathy in the *Treatise* and the 'sentiment of humanity' in the second *Enquiry*.

[28] Pàll Árdal observes that "the whole process of sympathy is conceived of by Hume in very mechanical terms. …There is no suggestion that in sympathizing one imaginatively puts oneself into the other person's place" (1989a, 45). Similarly Philip Mercer suggests, "this notion of sympathy seems more akin to the instinctive response which is emotional infection than to the exercise involving imagination and self-consciousness" (1972, 36). Both passages are quoted in Herdt 1997 (p. 42).

sympathy to explain a range of phenomena including the uniformity of national sentiment, the tendency to embrace the opinions of others, and the contagion of moods.

This automatic, often subconscious process of sympathy is crucial to Hume's claim that sympathy is natural. It is impossible, Hume insists, to be wholly unaware or unaffected by those around us. But though natural, Hume also discusses the forces that can hinder or limit our sympathy, and as many commentators have pointed out, it thus becomes clear that a more active, extensive sympathy is needed to serve as the source of moral distinctions.[29] What is required for the general view is a kind of sympathy that imaginatively enters into the other's viewpoint and apprehends her interests. The work of the imagination, of intentionally placing oneself in another's shoes, however, is active. It is something we must *do*. Thus, if moral evaluation depends upon sympathetic understanding of others, it seems that we must actively seek to extend our sympathy and to identify and overcome the barriers to sympathy. Our openness to the perspectives and experiences of others, especially those sufficiently different from us or those who dislike us, requires cultivation on our part, and it is quite an achievement to be deeply attuned even to those with whom we are closest. It appears, then, that the kind of sympathy required to ground moral evaluation goes beyond the passive sympathy that is described in Book II, especially given that moral judgments are required in a wide range of concrete circumstances and that in many situations our degree of sympathy might be quite weak. Our capacity for stable and reliable moral judgments therefore requires that we develop an ability to sympathize extensively and become mindful of the hindrances that block our awareness of others.

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[29] See, for example, Herdt (1997, 71-81), Mercer (1972, 64-65, 69), Abramson (2000, 46), and Baier (1991, 179-83).

One of the central obstacles to developing a wider sympathy is the interference of the 'principle of comparison,' which Hume discusses in Book II of the *Treatise* (and which, we saw, can give rise to the disagreeable passion of humility if others openly display their pride). Ordinarily in sympathy "when our fancy considers directly the sentiments of others, and enters deep into them, it makes us sensible of all the passions it surveys" (T 2.2.9.1, 245). However, "when we compare the sentiments of others to our own, we feel a sensation directly opposite to the original one, viz. a joy from the grief of others, and a grief from their joy" (T 2.2.9.1, 245). In other words, when we compare ourselves to others our central focus shifts from those others to ourselves, preventing us from "entering deep" into their feelings and often giving rise to the opposite feelings that the other person is experiencing, e.g., a joy that we do not suffer as they do or an envious pain at their good fortune.[30] An excellent example of this phenomenon can be seen in Mr. Casaubon's relationship to Will Ladislaw in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. Mr. Casaubon compares himself to his vibrant, talented nephew Will, and as a result, his sympathy with Will is quite shallow. Furthermore, because Will's talents highlight his own feelings of inadequacy, he is perpetually frustrated by Will's success.

When comparison blunts or even reverses our immediate sympathy in this way,[31] it also inhibits us from properly extending our sympathy—i.e., from sympathizing more

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[30] I think Hume overstates the matter when, without qualification, he says that comparison causes us to "feel a sensation directly opposite to the original one." We can think, for instance, of someone who compares another's loss with her own, and, on the basis of her own lesser (but still significant) loss, is able to feel a deeper sympathy with the pain of the other person than she would have had she not made the comparison. Certainly if she were to dwell on herself in the comparison, she would likely feel at least a subtle relief that she does not currently face such painful circumstances (even if she is not glad *that* another is suffering). But it is possible to make a comparison so as to focus on and better appreciate the situation of the other, thereby enlivening one's sympathy rather than curtailing it.

[31] I take it that the comparison of sentiments cannot entirely displace sympathy but assumes at least a very weak or limited sympathy for the comparison to get off the ground. The misery of another must somehow, however faintly, be disclosed to the person who, by comparison, goes on to take a pleasure in

fully with a person by considering the context of her life, imagining her future

possibilities, and ultimately, being concerned with her well-being.[32] As Hume says,

> the extending of our sympathy depends in a great measure upon our sense of his present condition. 'Tis a great effort of imagination, to form such lively ideas even of the present sentiments of others as to feel these very sentiments; but *'tis impossible we cou'd extend this sympathy to the future, without being aided by some circumstance in the present, which strikes upon us in a lively manner.* When the present misery of another has any strong influence upon me, the vivacity of the conception is not confin'd merely to its immediate object, but infuses its influence over all the related ideas, and gives me a lively notion of all the circumstances of that person, whether past, present, or future; possible, probable, or certain. By means of this lively notion I am interested in them; take part with them; and feel a sympathetic motion in my breast, conformable to whatever I imagine in his. If I diminish the vivacity of the first conception, I diminish that of the related ideas; as pipes can convey no more water than what arises at the fountain. (T 2.2.9.14, 248, emphasis mine)

In other words, extensive sympathy depends upon first having a "lively notion" of

another's present condition; without it, our apprehension, interest, and ability to feel

along with the other in her past, present, and potential circumstances is correspondingly

dull. But, as was explained above, the very means by which we gain this lively idea

characteristic of deep sympathy is very often curtailed or reversed by comparison. We

see this again in *Middlemarch* where, because Mr. Casaubon continuously compares

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the fact that she is not miserable or maliciously proceeds to take pleasure *in* the misery of the person as such. That sympathy is to some degree present even in comparison is evident in Hume's discussion of why the ill-grounded pride of others presents us with a disagreeable comparison. There he says that because "sympathy has such a powerful influence on the human mind, it causes [the] pride [of another] to have, in some measure, the same effect as merit; and by making us enter into those elevated sentiments, which the proud man entertains of himself, presents that comparison which is so mortifying and disagreeable." He further explains that by sympathy we enter into his prideful self-conception, but "[o]ur judgment does not accompany him in the flattering conceit, in which he places himself." Nevertheless, we are still "so shaken to as to receive the idea it presents" because "the firm perswasion he has of his own merit, takes hold of the imagination, and [by comparison,] diminishes us in our own eyes" (T 3.3.2.6, 380). Sympathy, albeit of a weak sort, is thus a prerequisite to comparison, for it makes present to us the proud person's conceit in the first place. (To clarify, I do not mean to suggest that extensive sympathy here would be to agree with his judgments. Rather, a wider, more extensive sympathy in this case would make present our common humanity, seeking to appreciate the full context of the person, while nevertheless holding firm to the judgment that his conceit is vicious.)

[32] Hume mentions that failure to be concerned with another's well-being, in turn, further inhibits the cultivation of extensive sympathy. "But as I am not so much interested as to concern myself in his good fortune, as well as his bad, I never feel the extensive sympathy, nor the passions related to *it*" (T 2.2.9.14, 249).

himself to Will and feels deficient in the comparison, Casaubon fails to receive a "lively notion" of Will's misfortune and likewise lacks a adequate appreciation of and corresponding concern for Will as a full person who is struggling to make his way despite the rough hand he has been dealt. Dorothea, on the other hand, who is (and actively strives to be) receptive to others, is strongly affected by the difficult circumstances surrounding Will's birth and upbringing, and this both makes her further concerned with his well-being and forms her imagination about what present and future difficulties Will might have to face because of his past.

Weak sympathy and vicious comparisons also tend to promote negative attitudes towards others, which then in turn block a wider sympathy even further. For example, Hume points out that while a deep or extensive sympathy is usually accompanied by benevolence, a weak sympathy with that which is painful or disagreeable in another tends to produce hatred and contempt (T 2.2.9.15, 249). Hume also thinks that comparison (which, as we saw, can prohibit a wider sympathy) accounts for the passions of malice and envy. Malice, according to Hume, is the "unprovok'd desire of producing evil to another, in order to reap a pleasure from the comparison" (T 2.2.8.12, 243). Envy "is excited by some present enjoyment of another, which by comparison diminishes our idea of our own" (T 2.2.8.12, 243). All of these sentiments—hatred, contempt, malice, and envy—depend upon a weak sympathy and, in turn, preclude the development of a deeper, more extensive sympathy.[33] Once again, these dynamics are illustrated in *Middlemarch*. Dorothea's robust sympathy with Will, and with all the novel's central

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[33] It seems that there is a reciprocal relationship here as well. Once we begin to sympathize more fully with one we envy and therefore hate, the hatred and envy begins to dissipate; on the other hand, if our hatred is strong enough, we may be incapable of the kind of sympathy needed to diminish those negative sentiments.

characters, promotes her benevolence towards them. Casaubon's weak sympathy and comparisons with Will are related to his envy and hatred of him, which intensifies as the novel progresses and which, in turn, spreads to coldness towards Dorothea because of her concern for Will.

In sum, then, comparing others to ourselves often displaces extensive sympathy. Moreover, since extensive sympathy is required to form adequate moral judgments in concrete situations, comparisons founded on weak sympathy prevent us from developing in moral sensitivity. How, then, does the virtue of pride contribute to our ability to sympathize and diminish our tendency towards vicious comparisons? It is noteworthy that when Hume presents his account of virtuous pride in Book III of the *Treatise*, he again discusses the potentially contentious relationship between sympathy and the principle of comparison explored in II.[34] But there, as was discussed above, it is those who *lack* virtuous pride who are constantly comparing themselves to others in an attempt to support their vanity (T 3.3.2.7, 380).[35] This sort of comparison essentially involves sniffing out the (real or assumed) weaknesses of others and doing so in a way that prevents extensive or deeply felt sympathy with those weaknesses. By contrast, those with a stable, secure selfhood, which is constitutive of virtuous pride, need not fundamentally rely upon vicious comparisons to reinforce their sense of worth, and they are therefore more able to be sympathetically attuned to others. Herdt remarks in her

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[34] It is also important to point out that in the "Of greatness of mind" passage Hume implicitly maintains the distinctions he made in T 2.2.8-9 between variations of sympathy (weak and deep or strong, limited and extensive). He, furthermore, explicitly refers back to these passages in T 3.3.2.4-5.

[35] See also the second *Enquiry* where Hume makes the connection between vanity and lack of due pride:

> For why that impatient desire of applause; as if you were not justly entitled to it, and might not reasonably expect that it would for ever attend you? Why so anxious to inform us of the great company which you have kept; the obliging things which were said to you; the honours, the distinctions which you met with; as if these were not things of course, and what we could readily of ourselves, have imagined, without being told them. (EPM 266)

assessment of Hume's account of the relationship between pride and sympathy that what

is needed is an

> ongoing background pride or self-awareness and esteem, which, rather than distracting us from the experiences of those around us, enables us to be more sensitive and open to those experiences. Just as the child with a secure and strong relationship with her mother is more friendly with strangers, while the insecure child clings to her mother, the person with healthy pride is able to sympathize with the sentiments and affections of others, while someone whose impression of self is in constant need of reinforcement is likely to be insensitive to those around her. (1997, 41-42)

A healthy pride or sense of self-worth better enables us to consider the sentiments of

others directly, which as was explained above, is the foundation for developing a more

extensive sympathy and compassion towards others. A wavering self-esteem, on the

other hand, makes us prone to support our sense of self-value by way of comparison,

which as we saw, leads to a weak, limited sympathy and promotes malice, envy, hatred,

and anger, which then limits sympathy even further. This phenomenon is all too familiar.

(And it is no surprise for Eliot's readers to learn that Casaubon's comparison with Will,

weak sympathy with him, and growing envy and hatred toward him all stem from the

fact that Casaubon is deeply insecure about whether his academic labors have any real

value—an insecurity that Will's presence consistently elicits.) For the person with

virtuous pride, though, comparisons in which she shows up inferior to others do not

undermine her sense of self-value since, as was argued above, the self-approval of the

virtuously proud is based not on being superior to others but on having attributes that

have "real and intrinsic merit" (T. 2.1.6.4, 191), regardless of how rare or common these

merits are. The assurance that we have value and can make valuable contributions to

others even if we are quite ordinary helps us neither quickly to feel worthless or exalted

by how we fare in comparisons with others. With this being the case, we likewise are

more disposed to acquire a wider sympathy, and with it, to develop greater moral acuity. It was Casaubon who, on the basis of his insecurity and weak sympathy, lacked moral insight, while Dorothea's finely-tuned sympathy afforded her exceptional moral clarity.

c. Pride and Moral Motivation

In addition to the role that virtuous pride plays in facilitating the development of extensive sympathy (and therefore in our ability to make insightful moral judgments), Hume thinks that pride also serves as the ultimate source of moral motivation. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Hume's account of moral motivation stands in contrast to proponents of both revealed and natural religion, who thought that desire for eternal reward and fear of eternal punishment was important for motivating morality. Indeed, as I will show, Hume's rehabilitation of pride as a virtue is not only an attack on the Christian tradition for making pride the chief vice, it is integral to his wholly immanentized account of ethics.

As discussed in section *III.* of the previous chapter, a prevalent view among intellectuals of Hume's day was that the concept of God was ultimately necessary for giving an account of why we should be motivated to rise above whatever selfish tendencies still linger after our natural sympathy and benevolence fall short. In these cases we should be motivated to act rightly, so the argument goes, because if we do not, we risk incurring eternal punishment. Hume, however, contends that our natural desire to think well of ourselves (i.e., to excite the passion of pride) does the real work of moral motivation, for if we value ourselves we will want to acquire the virtues that are befitting

of dignity. Prideful concern for one's character is, Hume thinks, a powerful motive to virtue.[36]

It is clear that Hume regards our desire for the *passion* of pride (i.e., the desire to approve of ourselves) as central to the structure of human motivation in general, often playing a dominant role in our concern for external goods, for possessing various qualities of character, and for securing the praise of others. I will explore how the desire for the passion of pride can motivate vicious behavior in the following chapter. Here I wish to show how *virtuous* pride (or the desire to acquire it) is, for Hume, especially important for specifically moral motivation.

Hume has spoken of virtuous pride alternately as possessing self-esteem/self-value and as having due pride (i.e., pride which is truly merited). Hume suggests an inseparability of these two senses of pride by using them interchangeably. I want to discuss their relationship in order to highlight why both aspects of pride are motivationally significant for the moral life.

The key to linking due pride with self-esteem, I think, is to emphasize what remains implicit in Hume—namely, that due pride is founded primarily on virtue rather than on possessing external goods such as wealth or beauty.[37] It is difficult to imagine, for example, a person who is lacking in virtue but who is very proud of her possessions as displaying *due* pride rather than conceit, even though her possessions may well be considerable and impressive. Or perhaps it is better to say that while it is possible to

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[36] See EPM 276 on this point. I will elucidate this passage in the body of the text later in this section.

[37] In her article entitled "Hume on the Dignity of Pride," Jacqueline Taylor points out that in the second *Enquiry* Hume rarely uses the mere term 'pride' to discuss the virtue. Rather, he tends to use the language of a noble or generous pride or of having dignity with respect to character, and he does, Taylor argues, so in order to stress that he regards pride in virtue that is primarily praiseworthy (2012, 44).

have merited pride *in one's possessions* (if one's possessions warrant approval), it would be excessive (i.e., vicious) pride to regard one's possessions as conferring more worth to oneself than is appropriate or to behave as though riches supersede virtue when it comes to one's value as a person. Pride seems most fitting, most laudable, when it is founded upon virtue, and this seems to be primarily what Hume has in mind when he speaks of due pride in the *Treatise*. To be sure, the discussion of due pride is under the heading "Of greatness of mind," which refers to certain qualities of character rather than to external goods.

This interpretation is supported by passages where Hume explicitly discusses the superior value of virtue over other things of which we might be proud. In the second *Enquiry*, for example, he speaks of the sinking value of animal conveniences and pleasures compared to inward beauty and moral grace (EPM IX.I, 276).[38] He furthermore says,

> …what comparison between the unbought satisfaction of conversation, society, study, even health and the common beauties of nature, but above all the peaceful reflection on one's own conduct [i.e., when we have conducted ourselves virtuously]; what comparison, I say, between these and the feverish, empty amusements of luxury and expense? (EPM IX.II, 283-84)

In this passage Hume implicitly offers a roughly-sketched hierarchy of goods: luxury at the bottom of the scale, physical beauty, health, study, etc. at the middle, and virtue at the pinnacle. It seems reasonable to suppose that merited pride, in contrast to conceit,

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[38] "The animal conveniences and pleasures sink gradually in their value; while every inward beauty and moral grace is studiously acquired, and the mind is accomplished in every perfection, which can adorn or embellish a rational creature" (EPM IX.I, 276).

Interestingly, we see here a secularized version of Augustine's concern with the order of our loves. Unlike Augustine, Hume does not (and cannot) give a metaphysical account of scale of value that could ground a hierarchy of value. For Hume, a scale of value could only be determined from the perspective of the general view. I will consider some difficulties with this in Chapter Six.

must appropriately correspond to the value of that in which one takes pride.[39] Indeed, in

ordinary experience we do tend to regard pride as excessive (and hence vicious) not only

if a person's pride exceeds her grounds for pride; we also do so if she exaggerates the

worth of even her merited pride, as we just saw with the example of the wealthy person.

In that case, the character of the person's pride reveals that she places too much value on

lesser goods and neglects the genuinely higher ones. By contrast, a person who pursues

virtue and approves of herself for orienting her life in that way would be regarded as

having the right kind of pride, even if she is poor or otherwise lacking in more external

goods.

Due pride, especially pride in or approval of one's virtue, is in turn related to

self-esteem because if we are genuinely to esteem ourselves, we can only so do to the

extent that we align ourselves with what we see as good. We cannot honestly approve of

and take pride in those character traits that we earnestly judge to be vicious or base, and

the difficulty of owning up to our failings attests to this. Therefore, so long we are able

to recognize true virtue, developing in virtue supports and further strengthens self-

esteem, whereas vice undermines it.

The connections that Hume draws between natural sympathy, the passion of

pride, and the nature of virtue, however, make this link between due pride in virtue and

self-esteem even more firm. As Hume observes, since we are sympathetically

constituted, we cannot help but be concerned with others' opinions of us or, as he puts it,

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[39] Other factors are relevant as well, however. While, as I have argued above, one might take pride in virtue even if that virtue is common, for other values the rarity of the object or the degree to which one is responsible for the object might be pertinent to the degree of pride that is due. For example, if one were a mediocre artist, it would be appropriate for her pride in her work to be tempered by the modest awareness that she is not an artist of remarkable talent. I discuss the role of comparison in developing due pride and due modesty in Chapter Four.

to "love fame" (T 2.1.11, 206-211; EPM 265, 276). The opinions of others, moreover, inevitably influence the extent to which we approve of ourselves. Indeed, Hume says that others' opinions have "an equal influence on our affections" as the original causes of pride and humility, and that "our reputation, our character, our name are considerations of vast weight and importance; and even the other causes of pride; virtue, beauty and riches; have little influence, when not seconded by the opinions and sentiments of others" (T 2.1.11.1, 206). Additionally, as was explained in the previous chapter, Hume thinks that our sympathetic nature enables us to approve those traits that are agreeable and useful to ourselves and to others (i.e., the virtues), and the sympathetic nature of others allows them to affirm those same traits.[40] Thus, if we are to esteem ourselves before others, the best way to do so is to acquire those very character traits that cannot but command their approbation.[41] In other words, love of fame or desire for due pride can and should, on Hume's account, direct us to the virtues, for possessing a good character is the surest way to secure the approval of others.

Now that I have shown the relationship between due pride/self-esteem and virtue in Hume, we can turn to the question of how pride is important for Hume's secular account of moral motivation. As I have said above, this issue becomes crucial for Hume to contend with in his attempt to establish the autonomy of morality from religion

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[40] On Hume's account, a quality that is disinterestedly judged to be valuable causes pride when that quality belongs to oneself and causes love when it is found in another. This is especially the case for virtue, which causes pride in oneself and merits approbation (a form of love) from others. Hume, in fact, defines virtue in terms of its power to produce pride or love:

> Now since every quality in ourselves or others which gives pleasure, always causes pride or love, as every one, that produces uneasiness, excites humility or hatred: It follows, that these two particulars are to be consider'd as equivalent, with regard to our mental qualities, *virtue* and the power of producing love or pride, *vice* and the power of producing humility or hatred. In every case, therefore, we must judge the one by the other; and may pronounce any quality of the mind virtuous, which causes love or pride; and any one vicious which causes hatred and humility. (T 3.3.1.3, 367)

[41] See Manzer (1996, 342) for a discussion on this point.

because in his day it was often thought that God was ultimately needed to articulate why we should be motivated to be moral, especially in those instances where it seems possible to profit by unjust means. Also, as was previously mentioned, this tended to be explained in terms of divine reward or punishment in the afterlife. We should be motivated to be just even when we can otherwise get away with injustice in this life, proponents of this view thought, because we will face a final judgment wherein we will have to reckon for our misdeeds. Hume cannot have recourse to this kind of response, however, since a dominant goal of his moral philosophy is to give an account of ethics that does not depend upon particular answers to larger metaphysical and religious questions. For Hume, then, pride, specifically the desire to behave in a way that warrants self-approval with respect to one's character, becomes the ultimate source of moral motivation.

To see more clearly how pride functions in Hume's secular account of moral motivation, we will have to look at how it serves as a response to the challenge of the 'sensible knave,' which Hume famously discusses at the end of the second *Enquiry*. Hume's sensible knave is someone who by and large plays the part of virtue but who seeks to benefit by acts of iniquity or infidelity in those exceptional cases where it appears that he can get away with doing so (see EPM 282-83). Hume has the burden of explaining why the sensible knave should, in these cases, be motivated to choose virtue over private advantage, even if there may be no afterlife and final day of reckoning of which to speak. Hume's response to the challenge that the knave poses is to point to our natural desire for a positive self-survey, i.e., for merited pride. We should be motivated to be moral even in those cases where we might profit through vice, Hume thinks,

because the pleasure of self-approval, of due pride taken in one's character, is higher than any "worthless toys and gewgaws" won by injustice (EPM 283).

It is worth noting that although Hume does not explicitly use the word pride in this passage, it is clear that he describes core features of virtuous pride outlined above.[42] Choosing virtue awards us, Hume says, with "the peaceful reflection on [our] own conduct" and therefore with the "invaluable enjoyment of [our] character" (EPM 283-84), which is another way of saying that it awards us with due pride, with merited self-esteem. Moreover, the "noble pride" discussed in Section VII of the *Enquiry* as a component of greatness of mind refers to having a sense of dignity and self-valuing with respect to one's character, which is made possible by the kind of peaceful self-reflection of which Hume speaks in the sensible knave passage.[43] So, although Hume avoids the word pride, it is the phenomenon of virtuous pride (or the desire for it) as he previously described it that he points to in his reply to the knave's challenge.

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[42] That pride, on Hume's account, serves as a motive for virtue is widely accepted in the scholarly literature as well.

[43] The following considerations also support understanding Hume as regarding the peaceful self-survey mentioned in the sensible knave passage to be exchangeable with virtuous pride as the ultimate source of moral motivation: First, Hume had previously observed in the final chapter of the second *Enquiry* that the "love of fame" lends a considerable motive to virtue (EPM 276). But since the love of fame, which is a concern for having a character with others, is inseparable from pride, it is appropriate to understand Hume as claiming that pride is a motivational support for virtue. Second, Hume explicitly links love of fame to greatness of mind and to the practice of moral self-examination, the latter of which he emphasizes in his reply to the sensible knave. See the following passage:

> Another spring of our constitution, that brings a great addition of force to moral sentiment, is the love of fame; which rules, with such uncontrolled authority, in all generous minds, and is often the grand object of all their designs and undertakings. By our continual and earnest pursuit of a character, a name, a reputation in the world, we bring our own deportment and conduct frequently in review, and consider how they appear in the eyes of those who approach and regard us. This constant habit of surveying ourselves, as it were, in reflection, keeps alive all the sentiments of right and wrong, and begets, in noble natures, a certain reverence for themselves as well as others, which is the surest guardian of every virtue. …[O]ur regard to a character with others seems to arise only from a care of preserving a character with ourselves. (EPM 276)

Thus, it is appropriate to interpret Hume's response to the knave to be that of pointing to the motivational power of pride, since Hume had already suggested the inseparability of pride, love of fame, and moral self-reflection before discussing the latter in his answer to the knave.

It would seem, by Hume's account, that pride is motivationally important for morality in two ways. First, for those who do not already possess the virtue of pride, simply the desire to think well of oneself (the desire to acquire merited and stable pride) can motivate virtue, since as was explained above it seems that in Hume's assessment virtue is the surest way to secure self-esteem. This desire for pride is not a desire that some may just happen to have; pride is both inherently and highly desirable, and we are bound by human nature to seek it. Were that not the case, attempts at self-deception and secrecy would not be so prevalent when we fail to live as we think we ought, nor would shame be so painful and, even at times, crippling. Thus the human need for pride (perhaps especially as it pertains to our need for social approval) can motivate virtue for even those who are not virtuously proud. Second, and more significantly, the more we actually possess the virtue of pride in addition to having the mere desire for positive self-assessment, the more we would be motivated to maintain a sense of moral dignity which would otherwise be tarnished by seeking to profit unjustly. In other words, the stronger our sense of moral dignity or noble pride, the more unwilling we are to do what goes against our sense of rightness. For the person who possesses the virtue of pride, the repulsiveness of securing private advantage by unjust means outweighs any allure that such advantage could offer.

What can be said, however, to those sensible knaves who lack sufficient concern for their character in the first place or who, even worse, are proud of their cunning ability to gain at the expense of others? At first glance Hume indicates that nothing can be said, since if one feels "no reluctance to the thoughts of villainy or baseness" then it will be difficult for the knave to be persuaded by any reasons to give up knavery (EPM

283). Hume goes on to suggest, though, that the sensible knaves are not fully honest with themselves. He says, "But in *all ingenuous natures*, the antipathy to treachery and roguery is too strong to be counterbalanced by any views of profit or pecuniary advantage" (EPM 283, emphasis mine), implying that we cannot be altogether unconcerned for our character or take unambiguous pride in what is, in fact, vicious.

A deeper look into Hume's moral psychology explains why. As Hume observes in his account of the passions in Book II of the *Treatise*, we naturally desire to feel pleasure with respect to ourselves (the passion of pride) and to avoid shame (the passion of humility). In Book III he explains how our sympathetic constitution causes us to approve of virtues (those traits and actions that are useful or agreeable to ourselves and others). Thus, although the sensible knave could be proud of his cleverness, he could not feel unambiguous pride with respect to his unjust or dishonest actions, for, as Hume's moral psychology suggests, his sympathetic nature at some level leads him to regard as those characteristics as vicious when viewed impartially.

The sensible knave therefore engages in self-deception; he is at least implicitly aware that he disapproves of his actions, even if it is not the position he explicitly avows. The pleasure of peaceful self-reflection is thus unavailable to him. The sensible knave should be motivated by the natural desire for fame and pride to act virtuously since virtue is the only way to ensure the approval of others and thereby to attain the sort of genuine self-approval that is requisite to a truly happy life. Hume suggests that human nature is constituted such that virtue gives a higher satisfaction than knavery, and if the knave fails to acknowledge this, he likewise fails honestly to take stock of his own nature. Whether this response to the challenge raised by the sensible knave is adequate

will be addressed more fully in the next two chapters. For my purposes now, it suffices

to point out the role that Hume ascribes to pride for serving as the ultimate source of

moral motivation in his secular moral philosophy.

III. The Vice of Humility

While Hume regards pride, the chief Christian vice, to be a virtue, and one that is

arguably integral, if not central, to his secular account of morality, he sees the central

Christian virtue of humility to be a considerable vice. Hume's most extensive discussion

of humility is in Book II of the *Treatise*, where he defines humility as that painful

passion of the self and describes the conditions for its emergence without there

considering it from the general view. What concerns us here, however, is Hume's

account and assessment of humility as a character trait. In this section, therefore, I will

show that, although Hume's comments on humility as a character trait are terse, the

context in which they are made reveal quite a lot about how he understands it and why

he regards it to be particularly harmful.

Just as Hume distinguishes between excessive pride and virtuous pride, so too

does he differentiate between the virtue of modesty and the vice of humility, and it is

helpful to begin with Hume's conception of modesty to clarify what he is *not* rebuking

when he relegates humility to the column of vices.[44] Hume defines the virtue of modesty

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[44] Hume does not always carefully distinguish between the character traits of modesty and humility. Nevertheless, a distinction can be made in light of what Hume *means* when he discusses them. If Hume discusses modesty as he initially defines it (i.e., as "a just sense of our weakness" (T 3.3.2.1., 378)), then, as he himself says, it is virtuous, presumably so long as it is also accompanied by a just appreciation of our strengths. When Hume discusses humility as a monkish virtue, he is clearly referring to a vice—a vice characterized by a tendency to feel the passion of humility to excess and to the neglect of our attributes, rather than simply to feel humility when appropriate. While occasionally Hume will seem to use modesty and humility interchangeably (see, for example, T 3.3.2.10-11, though a subtle difference between terms is arguably present even there, as I argue in footnote #48), he does differentiate between virtuous and vicious ways of relating to our weaknesses—a distinction that is generally, though not always consistently,

as "a just sense of our weakness" (T 3.3.2.1, 378) or as that virtue which is "opposed to *impudence* and *arrogance*, and expresses a diffidence of our own judgment, and a due attention and regard for others" (EPM VIII, 263). Moreover, in the *Treatise* he discusses modesty in close connection to due pride. Hume first advocates that we "carry a fair outside, and have the *appearance* of modesty" (T 3.3.2.10, 381, emphasis mine). This form of good manners whereby we refrain from open display of our merits serves to minimize the offense that expressing pride could cause in others precisely by its tendency to evoke uncomfortable comparisons. Perhaps more importantly, however, genuinely possessing the virtue of modesty (as opposed to its mere outward appearance) helps us to be open to and capable of learning from others, which incidentally is why Hume thinks that modesty is especially appropriate for the young (EPM VIII, 263).

Furthermore, although Hume does not say as much and although he does not emphasize modesty as being a particularly important virtue, it would seem that modesty (understood more as having a just sense of our weakness than as an outward social grace) is a necessary condition for possessing the virtue of pride. Since, as Hume thinks, we almost all incline towards excessive pride,[45] we need the virtue of modesty if we are to put ourselves in proper perspective and, thus, if we are to tether our pride to its just

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semantically demarcated as modesty and humility. In insisting that for Hume modesty is not humility, I side with but give more thorough argumentation for Baier's interpretation (1991, 206-7) and disagree with Manzer's conflation of the two (1996, 352). I also disagree with Jacqueline Taylor's way of distinguishing them. She claims that Hume regards modesty as (solely) a virtue of good social breeding that requires mutual deference in conduct and that he regards humility as "a natural sense of our own limitations" (2012, 43); this interpretation does not stay true to the relevant passages as should be clear from my analysis in the body of the text.

[45] See, for example, where Hume says, "Men have, in general, a much greater propensity to overvalue than undervalue themselves" (EPM 8, 264) or the *Treatise* where he refers to "[t]hat impertinent, and almost universal propensity of men, to over-value themselves" (T 3.3.2.10, 381).

domain.[46] Likewise, those few that tend to undervalue themselves need true modesty

(i.e., a *just* sense of their weakness) if they are to develop virtuous pride, since attaining

due pride would require them to overcome their blindness to their strengths and their

tendency to exaggerate their weaknesses. In this way, it seems that due pride and

modesty are mutually reinforcing and that either virtue cannot be maintained apart from

the other.

Modesty, however, is arguably not the same as humility for Hume,[47] though

exactly how Hume understands humility as a character trait is difficult to determine. We

know that in Hume's descriptive account of the passion of humility in Book II of the

Treatise that it is a disagreeable passion with respect to oneself. But while Hume

develops an account of pride as a virtue as well as a passion, he only refers to humility as

a vice in passing without filling out precisely what that vice entails. Accordingly, a bit of

constructive work is needed to ascertain how Hume conceives of humility as a character

trait distinct from modesty.

The first mention of humility as a disposition is in the section on "Of greatness of

mind" in the *Treatise*, where he is still somewhat measured and less explicit in his

critique of the prime Christian virtue than he is in the second *Enquiry*. There Hume

asserts that while the appearance of humility before others is part of good social

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[46] Baier also sees an important complementarity between due pride and modesty. She points out that "…in all but the omnipotent, due pride will be accompanied by due modesty" and that a modest sense of what one cannot do but that others can, of where one is weak while others are strong, need not cause uneasiness when it is coupled with a due sense of what strengths one does have (1991, 206-7).

[47] To clarify, the *passion* of humility would be a component of modesty, but I am arguing that modesty is not the same as humility *as a character trait*.

breeding and is useful for diffusing the offense to others caused by an unscrupulous display of pride, we have no real duty to humility as an inner reality.[48] He writes,

> I believe no one, who has any practice of the world, and can penetrate into the inward sentiments of men, will assert, that the humility, which good-breeding and decency require of us, goes beyond the outside, or that a thorough sincerity in this particular is esteem'd a real part of our duty. On the contrary, we may observe, that a genuine and hearty pride or self-esteem, if well conceal'd and well founded, is essential to the character of a man of honour, and that there is no quality of the mind, which is more indispensibly requisite to procure the esteem and approbation of mankind. (T 3.3.2.11, 382)[49]

By contrasting humility with self-esteem here, he seems to understand humility as a tendency to self-deprecation, an excessive dwelling on one's weaknesses and an inability to appreciate one's own genuine worth.[50] If modesty is a *just* sense of our weakness, humility seems to be an *excess* of the passion of humility, one that is disproportionate to our failings and that manifests or is constitutive of a fundamentally insecure self. While modesty is compatible with due pride, humility is here portrayed as opposed to it.

Hume's analysis of Pascal in "A Dialogue" reinforces this interpretation of humility. There Pascal is charged with making the "constant profession of humility and abasement, of the contempt and hatred of himself" (EPM 342), thus, indicating that

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[48] Here Hume seems to use humility and modesty interchangeably insofar as he refers to the polite deference we pay to others as part of good manners. Modesty (i.e., a just sense of our weakness), however, should go beyond mere appearance; it is a genuine virtue discussed both in the *Treatise* and the second *Enquiry*. Humility however is, in the *Treatise* passage, not only *not* "a real part of our duty" (T 3.3.2.11, 382), but it is portrayed as contrary to that ever-important virtue of pride. In the second *Enquiry* humility is explicitly mentioned as a vice, or rather as a fraudulent virtue pursued by those deluded by religious superstition.

[49] Similarly, in the second *Enquiry* Hume says, "He must be a very superficial thinker, who imagines that all instances of mutual deference are to be understood in earnest, and that a man would be more esteemable for being ignorant of his own merits and accomplishments" (EPM VIII, 264-65).

[50] Many scholars who have written on Hume's conception of humility support this interpretation. For example, Manzer says that for Hume "…humility too closely resembles the vice of meanness, a vice which betrays a deficient 'sense of what is due to one's self' and a lack of concern for the dignity of one's character (EPM, p. 265)" (1996, 352). Baier says that humility is "that necessarily disagreeable, debilitating passion, that dejection of the spirits which Hume had, with significant brevity, discussed in Book Two. Humility is a painful dwelling on shameful features of oneself, features one would like to hide" (1991, 206-7).

Hume associates humility with self-hatred. The notion that humility involves self-deprecation was common in the Calvinist religious culture of Scotland. As was explained in Chapter One, since Calvinism espouses a total depravity view of human beings, humility is understood in that tradition to demand the true recognition of our wretched condition. It is little wonder that Hume would conceive of humility as self-hatred if the surrounding religious culture considered having a deepening sense of one's depravity to be a fundamental virtue.[51]

Hume additionally seems to see the self-hatred of humility to be allied with meanness, particularly as he contrasts both with virtuous pride.[52] He describes meanness as the "absolute want of spirit and dignity of character, or a proper sense of what is due to oneself," as when "a man can submit to the basest slavery in order to gain his ends; fawn upon those who abuse him; and degrade himself by intimacies and familiarities with undeserving inferiors" (EPM 253). Indeed, there is a clear connection between seeing oneself as unworthy and letting oneself be treated as such by others.

Just as Hume's conception of humility as self-depreciation echoes the conception of humility in the religious mentality dominant in eighteenth-century Scotland, so too does this association of humility and meanness. This link is suggested, for example, in

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[51] Michael Gill 2008 cites some passages from William Perkins's catechism entitled "Foundation of Christian Religion Gathered into Six Principles," which spell out the principles that would have been instilled in children of a seventeenth-century English Calvinist household. For example, to the second question, "What doest thou believe concerning man and concerning thine own self?" an English child was taught to respond, "All men are wholly corrupted with sin through Adam's fall and so are become slaves of Satan and guilty of eternal damnation" (146) and that he himself "is by nature dead in sin as a loathsome carrion, or as a dead corpse [that] lieth rotting and stinking in the grave" (150), bearing corruption in "every part of both body and soul, like as a leprosy that runneth from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot" (151; quoted in Gill, p. 8). These sorts of sentiments, as we saw in Chapter One, were also expressed in the *Whole Duty of Man*, which Scottish Calvinists read in the eighteenth-century, the young Hume included. When raised in a culture like this, it would be difficult to escape associating humility with radical self-depreciation.

[52] See NHR X, 163-64 for Hume's explicit association of humility and servility/meanness. I discuss the relevant passage in the body of the text in the paragraph that follows the next.

The Whole Duty of Man, that spiritual treatise Hume read as a boy, which says that

humility as it concerns ourselves is "of two sorts; the first is having a mean and low

opinion of ourselves, the second is being content that others should have so of us" (VI.3,

135). That humility before God also involves meanness is suggested in *The Whole Duty*

when it says, "A Sixth duty is *humility*, that is, such a sense of our own meanness and his

excellency, as may work in us lowly and unfeigned submission to him" (II.1.1, 34). It

continues, "If we are not thoroughly persuaded that God is infinitely above us, that we

are vileness and nothing in comparison of him, we shall never pay our due obedience"

(II.1.2, 34).

However much *The Whole Duty* may have informed Hume's conception of

humility and its affinity to meanness, what it endorses is precisely what Hume rebukes.[53]

In the following passage from the *Natural History of Religion* Hume writes:

> Where the deity is represented as infinitely superior to mankind, this belief,
> though altogether just, is apt, when joined with superstitious terrors, to *sink the*
> *human mind into the lowest submission and abasement*, and to represent the
> monkish virtues of mortification, penance, *humility*, and passive suffering, as the
> only qualities which are acceptable to him. (NHR X, 163, emphases mine)

Shortly thereafter he again censures humility and mean servility: "…cowardice and

humility, abject submission and slavish obedience, are become the means of obtaining

celestial honors among mankind" (NHR X, 164). Hume clearly regards humility and

meanness as degrading, condemnable traits that are fundamentally opposed to the

characteristics that he acclaims in his account noble pride, as evidenced by contrasting

them with the "activity, spirit, courage, magnanimity, love of liberty, and all the virtues

which aggrandize a people" that are excited by emulating the Greek gods (NHR X, 163).

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[53] But this is, more fundamentally, because Hume rejects the view that humans are totally depraved.

Hume therefore thinks that if we view humility with an unprejudiced mind, we will see that it is merely a "monkish virtue," i.e., a vice that can only be approved when viewed from a vision distorted by superstition. Hume's famous passage on the monkish virtues is worth quoting in full:

> And as every quality, which is useful or agreeable to ourselves or others, is, in common life, allowed to be a part of personal merit; so no other will ever be received, where men judge of things by their natural, unprejudiced reason, without the delusive glosses of superstition and false religion. Celibacy, fasting, penance, mortification, self-denial, humility, silence, solitude, and the whole train of monkish virtues; for what reason are they every where rejected by men of sense, but because they serve to no manner of purpose; neither advance a man's fortune in the world, nor render him a more valuable member of society; neither qualify him for the entertainment of company, nor increase his power of self-enjoyment? We observe, on the contrary, that they cross all these desirable ends; stupify the understanding and harden the heart, obscure the fancy and sour the temper. We justly, therefore, transfer them to the opposite column, and place them in the catalogue of vices; nor has any superstition force sufficient among men of the world, to pervert entirely these natural sentiments. A gloomy, hair-brained enthusiast, after his death, may have a place in the calendar; but will scarcely ever be admitted, when alive, into intimacy and society, except by those who are as delirious and dismal as himself. (EPM 270)[54]

[54] It is worth noting that Hume paints monastic practices in their worse light, making them appear not only ridiculous but also destructive and issuing from psychological disturbance. His presentation suggests that these practices are chosen for their own sake, not ultimately to order one's loves (as Augustine would put it) to the higher good of charity. For a defense of monastic practices, see Father Zosima of *The Brothers Karamazov*. He says,

> Fathers and teachers, what is a monk? In the enlightened world of today, this word is now uttered in mockery by some, and by others even as a term of abuse. …The world has proclaimed freedom, especially of late, but what do we see in this freedom of theirs: only slavery and suicide! For the world says: "You have needs, therefore satisfy them, for you have the same rights as the noblest and richest men. Do not be afraid to satisfy them, but even increase them"… Taking freedom to mean the increase of prompt satisfaction of needs, they distort their own nature, for they generate many meaningless and foolish desires, habits, and the most absurd fancies in themselves. They live only for mutual envy, for pleasure-seeking and self-display. …And no wonder that instead of freedom they have fallen into slavery, and instead of serving brotherly love and human unity, they have fallen, on the contrary, into *disunity* and isolation… And therefore the idea of serving mankind, of the brotherhood and oneness of people, is fading more and more in the world…, for how can one drop one's habits, where will this slave go now that he is so accustomed to satisfying the innumerable needs he himself has invented?... Very different is the monastic way. Obedience, fasting, and prayer are laughed at, yet they alone constitute the way to real and true freedom: I cut away my superfluous and unnecessary needs, through obedience I humble and chasten my vain and proud will, and thereby, with God's help, attain freedom of spirit, and with that, spiritual rejoicing! (313-14)

If humility, as Hume seems to understand it, is seen to be the tendency to self-loathing, surely he is right in claiming that it is neither useful nor agreeable when seen from the general view. Humility especially merits moral disapproval, however, for the positive harm it causes. Given that I have already explained why virtuous pride is important for an empowered, stable selfhood, it should be clear at least in broad strokes how humility has the opposite effect. Lacking positive self-value makes us tentative, self-doubting, and small-minded in our pursuits, and it renders us prone to invidious comparisons. In what follows, however, I will examine additional ways that humility crosses the desirable ends of utility and pleasure.

First, not only is humility inherently painful, but because it is a pain most intimately related to the self, it is arguably the kind of pain most detrimental to a fulfilled life. While other monkish virtues produce pain by way of deprivation (e.g., of sex, food, company, etc.), humility, as understood by Hume, involves a pain pertaining to one's very being. While other monkish virtues are interpreted by Hume to be repudiating various ordinary human desires and needs, humility censures the self for having those desires and needs in the first place.[55] In this way humility thus conceived seems to denounce one's existence for being what it is—human. This sort of humility, especially in its extreme forms of self-deprecation and servility, thus stands fundamentally opposed to the affirmation of ordinary, this-worldly flourishing that is central to Hume's moral philosophy.

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[55] See Chapter One for a discussion of how the hyper-Augustinian tradition in particular tends to regard human desires as deeply disordered due to the totalizing effect of the Fall on human nature. Humility (i.e., self-abasement) is the proper stance towards oneself precisely because one's desires, even apparently good ones, at bottom issue from pride and vicious self-love.

Another harmful tendency issues from humility so conceived, namely, its tendency to "harden the heart," and therefore to curtail the development of a wider, more extensive sympathy. It is not uncommon to observe that those who dislike themselves are prone to dislike others and that the insecurity constitutive of humility may subconsciously lead one to seek a kind of relief through being excessively critical of others (we explored this latter point when analyzing Hume's discussion of the principle of comparison). Hume may have witnessed the heart-hardening effect of humility in the Scottish Calvinist culture in which he was raised, especially since the type of humility endorsed by hyper-Augustinianism can foster mistrust of oneself and others by prompting one to seek out hidden selfish motives in even seemingly virtuous acts and to hate such motives when they are found. As mentioned in Chapter One, a core preoccupation in the hyper-Augustinian trajectory is with purity of intention, and any tincture of pride in oneself for acting virtuously taints the goodness of the act, rendering it a vice.[56] Hume observes that pride (or a pleasing sentiment pertaining to the self) naturally follows upon recognizing that one possesses virtue, but because the hyper-Augustinians are apt to see such pride as vicious, it will appear to them that the sin of pride lurks everywhere. Thus, while hyper-Augustinian humility involves habitual self-depreciation on the basis of attending to one's "wretchedness," it could also lead to depreciation of others insofar as others are likewise understood to share a depraved nature. Cultivating this sort of critical, suspicious stance towards oneself and others, then, would seem to dampen rather than further awaken sympathy and the benevolence that flows from it. As Hume remarks,

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[56] See chapters six through nine of Herdt's *Putting On Virtue* (2008) for a discussion of the why the hyper-Augustinian tradition makes pride and hypocrisy chief concerns.

> What heart one must be possessed of who professes such principles [i.e., the view that all humans are depraved and that selfishness underlies even seemingly virtuous acts],…and also what degree of affection and benevolence he can bear to a species whom he represents under such odious colors… (EPM, App. II, 295).[57]

Perhaps more fundamentally for Hume, however, humility inhibits sympathy by the way it proceeds from and further entrenches what he calls 'artificial lives' (EPM 341-43). Artificial lives are produced when abstruse philosophical or religious theories about the world—theories that are incongruent with common experience—form a person's affective responses so that they do not operate in a normal manner. This is what has happened, Hume thinks, in those who regard humility as a virtue. The "delusive glosses" of religion cause one to approve of and even delight in humility, despite the fact that an impartial judge sees that humility is opposed to agreeableness and utility.

Hume charges Pascal, his example of a life made artificial by his Christian commitments, with displaying this emotionally distorted embrace of humility. Of Pascal he says,

> The aim of PASCAL was to keep a perpetual sense of his dependence before his eyes, and never to forget his numberless wants and infirmities. … The modern made constant profession of humility and abasement, of the contempt and hatred of himself; and endeavoured to attain these supposed virtues, as far as they are attainable. … Those [austerities] of the FRENCHMAN were embraced merely for their own sake, and in order to suffer as much as possible. … The saint

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[57] We could also speculate as to how Hume might think that humility contributes to a "stupefied understanding." While Hume indicates that the "delusive glosses of superstition and false religion" are needed for humility even to be regarded as a virtue in the first place, it is reasonable to suppose that, for Hume, cultivating the self-depreciating and servile disposition of humility warps the mind even further. As we explored in the previous chapter, the *Natural History* implies that revealed religion is irrational. According to Hume it is accepted not because it commands intellectual assent; rather, it is human insecurity that secretly motivates one to adopt a religious view. "Whatever weakens or disorders the internal frame promotes the interests of superstition…" (NHR XIV, 182). Although Hume does not say as much, we might surmise that training oneself to be self-depreciating creates a false need for redemption from one's depraved state. In this way, the insecurity created by inculcating within oneself a sense of one's own contemptuousness generates a psychological need for a religious answer, a promise of salvation of some sort—an observation that Nietzsche was later to make. There may thus be a connection between the insecurity created by humility and the motive for adhering to what Hume sees as a mind-warping, irrational religious perspective, one that has lost traction with human experience.

> refused himself the most innocent [pleasures], even in private. … The most ridiculous superstitions directed PASCAL'S faith and practice; and an extreme contempt of this life, in comparison of the future, was the chief foundation of his conduct. (EPM 342-43)

On Hume's interpretation, Pascal, by regulating himself according to a religious worldview that is out of touch with experience, embraces pain and forfeits pleasure. Hume suggests that to see Pascal from a vision free from the distortions caused by religious superstition, we will affirm that his behavior is unnecessary, without purpose, and destructive to his own happiness.

More significantly, however, Hume worries that the disruption of the "natural and usual force of the passions" (T 3.2.2.18, 311) characteristic of artificial lives impedes the development of sympathetic understanding. The normal operation of the passions is the material out of which sympathetic understanding is built, for it provides the basis for shared appreciation of the goods of human life, of this-worldly human flourishing. But the depreciation of this life, of the normal human sources of pleasure, of one's own selfhood—all involved in Hume's portrayal of religious humility—undercuts the very basis for sympathy, and hence for making sound moral judgments.

In turn, the incomprehensibility of artificial lives to ordinary persons impedes their ability to sympathize with those who order their lives by religious superstition. This is because, as Hume says,

> When men depart from the maxims of common reason, and affect these *artificial* lives… no one can answer for what will please or displease them. They are in a different element from the rest of mankind; and the natural principles of their mind play not with the same regularity, as if left to themselves, free from the illusions of religious superstition or philosophical enthusiasm. (EPM 343)

While normal persons cannot "answer for what will please or displease" (i.e., sympathize with) those whose passions have been disrupted by religion, unlike the

religiously superstitious their capacity for moral discernment is not thereby dimmed.

This is because normal persons have not lost connection with the typical sources of

pleasure and pain, approval and disapproval, from which a common language of moral

praise and blame is made possible. Their inability to sympathize in this case is not of

their doing; it is the irrationality of lives artificially formed by religious superstition that

makes those lives unintelligible to the general party of mankind. But the inability to

sympathetically understand the absurd emotional responses of many religious believers

leads to another issue of great concern to Hume: the social factions that such lack of

sympathy perpetuates and entrenches. Herdt notices how the centrality of sympathy in

Hume's account of ethics is tied to his concern for social peace. She observes that

> [i]n entering into the situations of others, we are able to look beyond factional
> prejudices to the shared goods of human existence, rooting moral judgment
> firmly in this-worldly human flourishing. To utterly devalue this existence [as is
> implicit in the stance of Hume's understanding of Christian humility], in contrast,
> is to lose the basis for understanding others, healing factional conflict, and living
> in peace. (1997, 5)[58]

Hume's critique of Christian humility is thus quite far-reaching and vital to his

project, for on many levels humility runs directly counter to his vision of a flourishing

human life. Not only does the debilitating, self-abnegating stance of humility

significantly harm those who practice it, it also diminishes their sympathy and hence

their benevolent action towards others. It even distorts (and is itself a distortion of) the

normal operation of the passions upon which morality as well as the capacity for

sympathy with others is based. In this way humility, as one significant aspect of artificial

lives, contributes to the formation of social factions, and it simultaneously removes the

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[58] For more on Hume's abiding concern with the way revealed religion limits sympathy and promotes faction, see Jennifer Herdt's excellent book *Religion and Faction in Hume's Moral Philosophy*.

means of healing those factions insofar as it is itself a disruption of the very grounds for sympathetic understanding and consequently for social peace.

IV. Assessment of Hume's Critique

Thus far I have shown how Hume seeks to rehabilitate pride as a virtue and to expose humility as a vice. This move, I have argued, is integral to his project of developing a secular ethic that affirms pleasure and that replaces religious morality, which he regards as anti-natural, other-worldly in focus, and suspicious of joy. In this section I want briefly to assess Hume's critiques of humility in light of how humility is actually understood within the Christian tradition in order to lay the groundwork for a more thorough-going assessment in the following chapters.

Hume is correct, I think, to see self-hatred and meanness as serious vices. Accordingly, I will argue that Hume rightly points to harmful tendencies in certain conceptions of Christian humility (most especially in the hyper-Augustinian tradition). But I will also argue that Hume's polemical portrayal of humility also conceals the ways in which certain Christian thinkers (particularly in the Christian humanist tradition, as represented by Aquinas) would, in fact, agree with Hume in censuring self-deprecation and approving of proper self-love. At the end of this chapter and throughout the remaining chapters, I will therefore try to locate precisely where Hume and Aquinas agree and where they diverge on the phenomena pertaining to their different definitions of pride and humility. I do so in order to work towards bringing out what is really at stake between them in their opposing conceptions of the relationship between religion and human flourishing and of their different understandings of the proper attitudes that we should take towards ourselves.

As should be clear from Chapter One, Hume's portrait of humility is not exactly what Christian thinkers had in mind when they endorsed it, nor is his conception of pride as self-esteem quite what they denounced as the chief vice. Therefore, in order to assess the extent to which reversing the place of pride and humility as a part of Hume's attack on Christianity is successful, we have to look at how well Hume meets his target. It may be helpful to begin by considering what it is in the Christian tradition that Hume condemns by his transposition of pride and humility in his catalogue of virtues and vices. As I have shown above, Hume's approval of pride is connected to his affirmation of this-worldly pleasure and his sense that morality goes with the grain of human nature, not against it. Correspondingly, his critique of humility and the monkish virtues in general implies that Christian morality involves inflicting needless misery on oneself and, as Nietzsche was later to say, is anti-nature.[59] In this way, it appears that Hume's dominant concern about Christian humility is that it is self-mutilating, insofar as it is both painful and unnatural. Moreover, Hume worries that the artificial lives expressed in this unnaturally forced mode of being further weaken our sympathetic capacity by disrupting the natural operation of the passions, which leads to moral blindness and intolerance.

a. Hyper-Augustinian Humility

How accurate are these critiques? To answer this question we must first consider the extent to which Hume truthfully characterizes Christian humility. Despite the fact that Hume implicitly levels his critique of humility against Christianity in general, it should be quite clear from Chapter One that Hume's portrayal of humility bears more resemblance to the hyper-Augustinian strand of Christian thought than it does to the

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[59] See Craig Beam 1996 for a valuable discussion of the similarities between Hume and Nietzsche.

Christian humanist strand. This is unsurprising given that the religious culture in which

Hume was raised was deeply shaped by the hyper-Augustinian theology of John Calvin.

In this section I will highlight three ways in which Hume's depiction of humility does in

fact look much like the hyper-Augustinian conception, and I will evaluate whether and

to what extent Hume's critiques of this sort of humility are aptly applied to this

theological trajectory.

First, as should be obvious from Chapter One, Hume's conception of humility as

self-deprecation is a fairly accurate depiction of the hyper-Augustinian conception. As

mentioned above and explained more fully in the first chapter, hyper-Augustinians think

that human nature is profoundly corrupted by the Fall, and thus they understand true

humility to involve adequately recognizing this condition in oneself. For the hyper-

Augustinian, therefore, humility is attained by becoming more deeply mindful of and

grieved by one's abject state. *The Whole Duty of Man*, for instance, advocates this form

of humility when it tells us to "get [our] hearts possessed with the sense" that we are

"poor worms of the earth,…able to do nothing,…polluted and defiled, wallowing in all

kind of sin and uncleanness" (II.1.3, 35), and we saw that each of the hyper-Augustinian

thinkers that were considered in chapter one had a similar view of humility.

Before assessing whether Hume's *moral* objection to this form of humility is an

appropriate critique of the hyper-Augustinian tradition, it is worth mentioning that his

arguments against what he calls the 'selfish hypothesis' of human nature convincingly

show that the thoroughly negative picture of human beings, which underlies the hyper-

Augustinian conception of humility, is itself inadequate. While Hume agrees that we

carry within us "elements of the wolf and serpent," he insists that when we attend to

experience we see that we have some humanity, "some particle of the dove" in us as well (EPM IX.I, 271). That is, alongside our tendencies towards selfishness and revenge we have a natural sympathy with or "sentiment of humanity" for others.[60] Hume is surely correct, I think, that experience reveals human nature to be mixed, not altogether evil. While hyper-Augustinians rightly recognize the human capacity for evil and are in many ways more sensitive to this than is Hume, Hume rightly argues that this sort of stress on sinfulness is too strong (ESY 82), causing proponents of this view to ignore (or to misinterpret as ultimately selfish)[61] our natural sympathy and the attitudes and actions that flow from it. Moreover, Hume helpfully points out in his essay "Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature" that the negative view of human nature unfairly depends not only on a lopsided emphasis on human weakness but also on comparing human beings to exalted notions of the most perfect wisdom and virtue (ESY 82-83), i.e., God.

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[60] See Appendix II of the second *Enquiry* entitled "Of Self-Love" for Hume's thorough argument against the selfish hypothesis. See also a different version of his argument in his essay "Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature" (E 84-86). See EPM 215-232 as well.

[61] The tendency to read even our good desires as being ultimately selfish stems in part, I think, from accepting a false dichotomy between egoism and altruism. Within the hyper-Augustinian tradition, it stems also from a worry that the self-approval we feel in response to recognizing our moral success is vicious pride, corrupting whatever was good in our action/intention. Hume addresses these concerns in "Of the Dignity and Meanness of Human Nature" (ESY 85-86). There he observes that those who insist upon the selfishness of human beings tend to do so for two reasons. First, the "secret pleasure" that attends virtue and friendship is believed to reveal that even these goods are motivated by self-interest. But as Hume points out, this construal of the relationship between pleasure and virtue is motivationally backwards. Pleasure arises from the virtuous sentiment; we do not love virtue *for the sake of* the pleasure that follows from it. Likewise, the joy we feel in being good to our friends arises *because* we love them; we do not love them because of that pleasure. (Thus, it is a mistake to think that just because one takes pleasure in goodness that it is therefore egoistic. To conceive of morality as essentially altruistic and then to believe that pleasure in goodness reveals hidden egoism is to misunderstand the nature of morality and the way that the passions operate with respect to it.) Second, that we desire approval for our virtue (i.e., our "vanity" or "love of fame") is also often taken to be evidence for the selfish view of human nature. On this view, the true colors of what appears to be virtue are revealed once we look at the murky depths of human motivation and see that pride is what really fuels seemingly moral action. Hume argues, however, that our desire for approval is wrongly demonized, for it is actually a close ally of virtue and "it is almost impossible" to be entirely free from it. I will not detail his argument to that effect here, though, since I will be discussing the love of fame extensively in the next chapter.

It is unjust, Hume suggests, to judge humans to be utterly contemptible only on the basis of such an inequitable comparison.

In my view Hume is clearly right to conclude that there are good as well as selfish impulses in human nature and that a view which admits to only the latter fails to pay adequate attention to human experience. Indeed, the very fact that *The Whole Duty* demands that we impress upon ourselves a sense of the vileness within our hearts so as to appreciate our distance from God (II.1.3, 35) could suggest that this harsh view of human nature is not wholly true. We do not straight-forwardly see that we are thoroughly wretched; it is a stance that must be inculcated. Genuine virtue must be founded upon what is the case, and thus a true account of human nature has implications for what dispositions are in fact virtuous. Because Hume gives a more even-handed account of human nature, I think that he is correspondingly more persuasive that the virtuous stance to take towards ourselves is to be appropriately proud of our genuine merits and to have a just sense of modesty with respect to our weaknesses than it is to see ourselves as utterly wicked.[62] Furthermore, I think that he successfully gestures towards the destructive personal effects of hyper-Augustinian humility, such as the needless pain it causes and the motivationally crippling effects it can have upon those who practice it.

The second way in which there is a significant likeness between Hume's characterization of humility and the hyper-Augustinian conception is that both see it as involving a discontinuity with the ordinary operation of the passions, a discontinuity which the hyper-Augustinians regard as elevating and which Hume sees as deforming.

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[62] I will briefly develop a more nuanced account, however, of the proper and improper ways that we can be proud of our merits in Chapter Six.

We saw this in Hume's characterization of humility as an expression of artificiality in the life of Pascal. There Hume sees humility as an attitude that can only develop when one accepts a picture of the world that is out of step with experience and then seeks to regulate one's life according to this false theory. The suggestion is that the religious worldview of Pascal—and the various sorts of worldviews contained in and transmitted by 'revealed' religion—requires one senselessly to habituate one's passions to respond in a manner out of keeping with natural human responses. It is this inauthentic formation of the passions that accounts for why the "monkish virtues," including humility, are affirmed by the religious. For how, Hume suggests, could self-deprecation otherwise be judged to be virtuous?

Like Hume, the hyper-Augustinians see humility (and Christian virtue in general) as requiring a break from the ordinary operation of the passions, but, as we saw in Chapter One, this is because they regard unredeemed human nature as profoundly disordered since the Fall. Human nature, they think, is so utterly sinful that we are incapable of even being directed toward goodness. Accordingly, they tended to think that apparent virtue among the non-elect in reality was merely a clever mask for the pride and selfishness that inevitably guides the action of fallen human beings acting on their own power. By contrast they regard true goodness, the goodness of God and of those whom God chooses to offer his grace, to be entirely different in kind; for the Protestant Reformers it is marked by a pure, wholly selfless sort of love, uncontaminated by self-interest or self-aggrandizement.[63] While, to be sure, hyper-Augustinians agree

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[63] The Jansenists debated and came to various subtle conclusions about the extent to which our disinterested love of God was possible, but as was noted in Chapter One, they were more suspicious of the potentially contaminating effects of self-interest than thinkers (e.g., Aquinas) who embraced a eudaimonistic framework.

with Hume that humans have a great propensity toward pride, they see this as evidence in support of their negative assessment of human nature. Moreover, although they would regard the self-condemnation and selflessness of humility to be unnatural to fallen human beings (and impossible apart from grace), it is precisely because of this that it marks a change in direction from sin to holiness.

Hume and hyper-Augustinians agree, then, about the general character of humility and its "unnaturalness." But is Hume's critique of humility as a mode of artificial living convincing only if one already accepts his standpoint? In other words, does Hume's critique here beg the question of whether his account of human nature and the virtues or a hyper-Augustinian's account is ultimately true to experience and genuinely leads to flourishing? We see this problem in the very way that Hume and Pascal give rival interpretations of flourishing, of what experience teaches, and correspondingly, of each other's way of life. Hume begins with a descriptive account of human nature as we find it and of what human happiness looks like within the patterned operations of the passions, and he thinks that attempting fundamentally to change or subvert this nature will only end in self-deception, artificiality, and false happiness. Pascal begins with the view that human nature is corrupt and that, as a result of the Fall, there is something deeply wrong with the ordinary way human passions operate. On this view, what is needed is to be sanctified by divine grace and so to discover our *true spiritual nature*, in which genuine freedom and joy is found. Since the hyper-Augustinian position accepts a somewhat sharp differentiation between "natural man" (referring to unsanctified human nature) and our nature as spiritual beings made for God (which we become more fully aware of in and through the process of sanctification),

Hume's complaint that Christian virtue is ultimately unnatural would ring hollow to

Pascal. This is because on Pascal's account, Christian virtue is unnatural to fallen man

but at home with our deeper, spiritual nature. It is sin and pride that, although in one

sense "natural," are in fact indicative of our alienation from our nature as made for God.

We see Hume's and Pascal's views play out in their alternate interpretations of

each other. In "A Dialogue" Hume charges Pascal with forsaking ordinary human

happiness (the only happiness we know) for an artificially induced other-worldly

happiness. Pascal's embrace of humility, on Hume's view, is thus part of and further

contributes to his self-deceived posture to the world.[64] Pascal, however, charges those

who seek this-worldly happiness (as does Hume) with self-deceptively ignoring their

desire for God, in whom true happiness is to be found, precisely by tacitly distracting

themselves with worldly amusements.[65] What is more, Hume's account of human virtue

and this-worldly flourishing, on Pascal's view, leaves out a crucial and telling element of

human experience—i.e., the despair and emptiness we feel in our search for worldly

happiness. Hume's condemnation of humility, from Pascal's perspective, would thus

represent his attachment to self and his refusal to accept his need for God.[66]

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[64] As Herdt points out, Hume's criticism of the Catholic Jansenist would have equally applied to Scottish Calvinism and is arguably a discreet way in which he can safely object to the corrupting influences of the religious tradition that would have informed the views of many of his readers (1997, 182).

[65] Consider Hume's bout with "philosophical melancholy and delirium" prompted by questions such as "Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive my existence, and to what condition shall I return? Whose favour shall I court, and whose anger must I dread?…" (T 1.4.7.8, 175). He finds that the "cure" for his ailment to be entering into the pleasures of common life: "I dine, I play a game of back-gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hour's amusement, I wou'd return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strain'd, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther" (T 1.4.7.9, 175). Pascal would see Hume's philosophical depression to be importantly revelatory of the human condition and his attempt to gain freedom from these crucial questions of human existence through back-gammon and conversation as precisely the sort of distraction that he regarded as spiritually dishonest and harmful.

[66] See Herdt's *Religion and Faction* for a more thorough comparison of Hume and Pascal (1997, 181-188).

Although we have here two opposing conceptions of human nature and happiness and whether one accepts or rejects a given view of humility depends in part upon whether one accepts or rejects the worldview that informs it, I do think that Hume has the more powerful critique.[67] To begin with, I think it can be shown that hyper-Augustinians (and with it, their conception of humility) cannot really escape the natural operations of the passions that Hume describes. Indeed, although Hume thinks that some of our passions can be successfully warped by religious superstition and enthusiasm, he does not think that we can wholly alter our nature. As Hume remarks, "[no] superstition [has] force sufficient among men of the world, to pervert entirely these natural sentiments" (EPM 270). The hyper-Augustinian affirmation of humility is, I think, an example of a way in which a disruption to normal human passions cannot be sustained. As discussed above, Hume describes in Book II of the *Treatise* how the passion of pride just does follow upon recognizing those aspects of ourselves that are praiseworthy and humility follows upon becoming aware of our disagreeable characteristics. This being the case, it is, as Baier points out, self-defeating to approve of humility (1991, 216-18). Since pride is constitutive of the approval of virtue when found in oneself, the person who regards humility as a virtue finds herself in the contradictory position of taking pride in her humility. It seems to me that this is why the spiritual writings of hyper-Augustinians commonly express an anxiety over pride. Moral progress naturally invites being pleased in oneself for such progress, but if this pleasure is seen as sinful pride, it appears that there is no way to overcome vice. Luther's approach to finding relief from this predicament is to perpetually cast oneself upon the mercy of God. But Hume's

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[67] Pascal's insights into the human condition that Hume arguably does not adequately explore can be articulated in a Christian humanist framework—a framework that allows for the place of transcendence in human life without succumbing to some of the pitfalls of hyper-Augustinianism.

description of the passions suggests a better interpretation. We cannot, on Hume's account, escape pride in virtue, precisely because that is the natural operation of the passions. Furthermore, to feel humility as a response to virtue would be incomprehensible.[68] Angst over appropriately-placed pride is thus unnecessary to begin with and Luther's "solution" is a response to a pseudo-problem.[69]

Another way in which Hume is more persuasive in seeing hyper-Augustinian humility as signaling a corruption of the human passions is suggested by his articulation of the natural operation of the passions and their relation to our language of moral praise and blame (i.e., his project of providing a moral anatomy). Hume's descriptive project renders human emotions and behavior increasingly intelligible, and if Christian virtue is supposed to involve passions that are wholly *different from* their operation in the unredeemed (as is described by Hume, for example), a coherent account of moral psychology must be given to show how they are possible and how they make sense. But instead, as was suggested in Chapter One, the discussions of a moral psychology that could account for Christian virtue among hyper-Augustinians tends to be absent or opaque, which gives support to Hume's contention that their ideas of true virtue are unfounded, lacking the real support provided by human experience.

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[68] To be sure, the Protestant Reformers preserve the intelligibility of the passion of humility in Hume's sense insofar as they insist that we should not feel humility in our virtue as such. Rather, they stress that it is because we are thoroughly sinful that we should feel utter humility. But they also hold that any virtue we do have is God's doing, not our own; hence, it is inappropriate to feel pride for something that we were powerless to bring about. (This was discussed in chapter one.) Nevertheless, what contributes to a distorted response of the passions here is: 1) the tendency to identify more sin in oneself than is really there out of an attempt to be pious, 2) the denial that one's will plays a central role in formation of character.

[69] Part of the negative reaction to our tendency to take pride in virtue undoubtedly stems from a concern that our self-approval can involve more self-gazing than seems virtuous. As I will discuss in chapter five, I do think that there is something important in this worry, but I also think that Christian humanist categories are better able to articulate the moral temptation implicit in too much pride over one's virtue than are hyper-Augustinian ones.

In addition to these above two points, when Hume's arguments against the selfish view of human beings as well as his arguments against the epistemological viability of revealed religion (as discussed in Chapter Two) are taken in total, Hume's contention that humility is a forced, artificial mode of being rather than a genuine human ideal, seems to be correct when humility is understood as self-deprecation. I take his larger point in "A Dialogue" to be likewise persuasive—that if Christian virtue is seen to require a fundamental departure from the natural operation of the passions, then an attempt to aspire to it will be mangling rather than ennobling, the supposed virtues will lose intelligibility, and the capacity for sympathy between the those whose passions are under the influence of religious superstition and those whose are not will be impeded.

The third way in which Hume's conception of humility can be seen to resemble the hyper-Augustinian conception (particularly among the Protestant Reformers) is apparent in the connection Hume draws between humility and meanness or slavishness (see, e.g., EPM 253). Humility, as understood by the Protestant Reformers, can be regarded as involving servility for the following two reasons. First, as we saw in Chapter One, Luther and Calvin tended see divine and human agency disjunctively. On their view human effort unaided by grace is doomed to carry the stain of selfishness and pride, and hence our only "work" is humbly to assume a posture of passivity, letting God's grace work through us. Any good we have, Luther and Calvin affirm, is wholly God's gift; we do nothing to merit it and, in fact, Hell would be the just desert for the attitudes and actions we bring about by our own power. It is therefore unsurprising that the Calvinist emphasis on passivity, in addition to a harsh view of human nature, would

lead Hume to portray humility as lacking proper self-reliance and a sense of what is due to oneself, as well as involving self-deprecation.

The second and perhaps the most significant way in which Hume's association of humility and meanness targets the humility of the Protestant Reformers, however, is the servility of mind implied by their commitment to theological voluntarism. As explained in chapter one theological voluntarists hold that ultimately what *makes* God's commands good just is his willing them. Although all Christian conceptions of humility include the posture of submission to the will of God, voluntarism can make the submissive aspect of humility seem akin to slavish obedience to a divine dictator. This is because God's decrees are understood to be morally binding ultimately by virtue of divine fiat rather than because those decrees point to what is good and do so in a way that can be recognized and affirmed by human understanding.[70] The way in which theological voluntarism expresses meanness or servility is explicit in *The Whole Duty of Man*. It says:

> But I told you, humility contained in it not only a submission to his will, but also to his wisdom; that is, to acknowledge him infinitely wise, and therefore that whatever he doth is best and fittest to be done. And this we are to confess both in his commands, and in his disposing and ordering of things. First, whatsoever he commands us either to believe or do, we are to submit to his wisdom in both, to believe whatsoever he bids us believe, how impossible soever it seems to our shallow understandings, and to do whatever he commands us to do, how contrary soever it be to our fleshly reason or humour, and in both to conclude, that his commands are most fit and reasonable, however they appear to us. (II.1.9, 40-41)

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[70] From within the hyper-Augustinian, voluntarist perspective, true obedience to God requires that our actions be motivated out of genuine love for God, and likewise loving submission to God would not be *experienced* as "slavish" or degrading as Hume implies. But it is still legitimate to ask whether there just *is* an element of slavishness present in following a command ultimately only because God commanded it (and could have just as well commanded otherwise), even if it is not constituted as demeaning by the believer.

This popular spiritual treatise gives expression to a common eighteenth-century Scottish

Calvinist view that humbly submitting to God's (supposed) commands involves

believing and acting upon "whatsoever he bids us to believe," even when doing so seems

to contradict what strikes us as true or good. In other words, humility on this view

requires that we suppress our own mental life when it would raise misgivings about

apparent divine wisdom.[71] Of course this sort of exhortation to obliterate our reason and

to blindly obey would have been seen by Hume as a sure symptom of a worldview that is

not grounded in experience. Such a worldview becomes especially dangerous when its

anti-intellectualism is seen to be required by God, for then adherents of that worldview

have theological precedent for being closed to reasonable dialogue and critique from the

outside. For Hume, then, not only does hyper-Augustinian humility lead to a distorted

emotional formation, which upsets the typically shared sources of pleasure and pain that

make sympathy possible. It also, perhaps especially in the Protestant trajectory, leads to

a dulled intellect, which undermines the basis for shared discourse, fruitful critique, and

mutual understanding.

In sum, with such basic human faculties—reason and emotion—stunted and

malformed by humility, it seems right to say that Hume's concern with humility is not

only that it undermines individual flourishing by its unwarranted, self-induced contempt

for oneself but that it also tears at the fabric of social life. It promotes faction because

acting upon beliefs that are held out of piety, not for any deeply intelligible reasons,

would surely cause social conflicts between different religious groups who have

different convictions with respect to what divine wisdom consists in. Furthermore, it

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[71] Doubting the divine wisdom would be a failure of faith. Note that on this model, in contrast to the tradition of Christian humanism, faith and reason can look more like enemies than companions.

curtails development of the very sympathy that can repair factional divides. Since there is sufficient similarity between Hume's conception of humility and hyper-Augustinian conceptions, I think that there is sufficient strength to Hume's critiques of it to conclude that the hyper-Augustinian form of Christian humility is problematic and harmful. In highlighting how hyper-Augustinian humility combines within it its characteristic theological positions with respect to human depravity, divine and human agency, and the relationship between faith and reason, I have also sought to suggest that Hume's multi-faceted critique of humility contains within it a critique of the hyper-Augustinian stances on these larger issues.

What Hume's rhetorical dismissal of humility neglects is that in the hyper-Augustinian tradition we are not to wallow in self-hatred; instead we are to recognize our profound inadequacy largely *as a means* to affirming more deeply the greatness of God, to kindling a desire to obey God rather than to be enslaved to ourselves, and to evoke gratitude for God's grace in helping us to be good. Thus hyper-Augustinian humility may not, in practice, be quite as damaging as Hume suggests.[72] And, indeed, the aspect of humility that pertains to submitting to the will of God can promote virtue insofar as (purported) divine commands really are good. Nevertheless, Hume's critique of it serves as an important corrective to a tendency towards remaining in self-hatred, and it rightly questions the value of developing an overblown sense of our unworthiness to begin with. More fundamentally, however, I think Hume rightly rebukes hyper-Augustinian theology for its harsh view of human beings, a view which encourages its

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[72] I also think that hyper-Augustinian humility does less harm than it otherwise might precisely because Hume is right that, by and large, we do live by the "natural and usual force of the passions," and, thus, despite the fact that hyper-Augustinians esteem humility (understood as keeping before oneself a perpetual sense of one's own vileness and utter need for grace), it is seldom practiced consistently.

adherents to cast an excessively suspicious eye towards ordinary human desire (and even towards reason), whether in oneself or in others.

b. The Christian Humanist Humility of Aquinas

As should be immediately clear in light of the account of Thomistic humility presented in chapter one, Hume's portrayal of humility as self-deprecation is quite different from how Aquinas actually conceived of virtuous humility. First, because Aquinas does not regard human nature as wholly corrupted by the Fall but, rather, thinks we maintain an orientation to goodness, truth, and beauty, Aquinas does not regard us as utterly wretched. Thus, he does not espouse a view of humility that resembles self-hatred, for human beings do not, on his view, truthfully warrant thorough self-disapproval. On the contrary, Aquinas makes very clear that smallness of soul is not true humility but is a core feature of the vice of pusillanimity (ST II-II:133.2) and instead maintains that "humility observes the rule of right reason whereby a man has true self-esteem" (ST II-II:162. 3.r2). Even more tellingly, however, Aquinas sees magnanimity as a virtue and, in fact, links magnanimity to true humility (ST II-II:162.1.3). This is hardly the view of someone who endorses habitual self-depreciation.

Second, as was also explained in Chapter One, because Aquinas thinks that humans by nature maintain an orientation towards goodness and are capable of making progress in virtue, he does not regard the sphere of unredeemed human nature to be wholly without virtue, nor does the he see the normal operation of the passions to be wholly disordered. Indeed, in contrast to the hyper-Augustinian suspicion of the ordinary operation of the passions, Aquinas thinks that all humans share natural inclinations toward the human good and that these inclinations form the basis of natural law.

Specifically Christian or 'theological' virtues are, Aquinas maintains, in harmony with

and the deepest fulfillment of these natural inclinations, not opposed to them as the

hyper-Augustinian way of conceiving of the relationship between nature and grace

suggests. Thus, Aquinas would not see the pride that Hume observes to be so dominant

in the operation of human emotions to be necessarily problematic, nor does he see

humility to be something entirely discontinuous with the normal way that pride functions

in the human heart.[73] Aquinas is sensitive to the morally problematic ways in which we

can take pride in our virtues (ST II-II:162.6.r1). Nevertheless, in contrast to the hyper-

Augustinian anxiety over the prevalence of pride, Aquinas does not think that pride (or

self-interest) necessary tarnishes all pagan action, he does not interpret approval of one's

virtue to be pride (see ST II-II:129), nor does he think that a vicious sort of pride in

virtue is terribly difficult to overcome once it is identified (ST II-II:162.6.r1). In fact as

we saw in Chapter One, he regards humility and magnanimity to be natural virtues

available to pagans and Christians alike. Therefore Hume's critique that humility is an

expression of artificial lives, i.e., lives out of touch with the natural operation of human

passions, seems to fall flat when applied to Aquinas.[74]

Third, since Aquinas is not a voluntarist, his conception of humility is free of the

more extreme servile overtones that are prevalent in hyper-Augustinian modes of

spirituality. While Aquinas's conception of humility is embedded within his theistic

worldview and as such includes the notion that we are to be willing servants of God, it is

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[73] I grant, however, that Hume and Aquinas would have different stances on how deeply and extensively we need to cultivate modesty/humility, on what it is right to take pride in, and in what respect such pride should be taken. These are deep issues that will be discussed in Chapter Five and Six.

[74] Hume's critique of humility is also a critique of the stringencies of the monastic tradition of which Aquinas is a part. While Aquinas sees much good in our ordinary passions, his conception of humility is demanding and puts significant strain on our natural tendencies to pride. I will explore the ascetic element in Aquinas's account of humility in the final chapter and discuss it in light of Hume's repudiation of the monkish virtues.

significant that Aquinas thinks we can *understand* why God's commands are good through use of our intellect (as well as by faith that is informed by reason). In this way Thomistic humility before God cannot, I suggest, be regarded as a degrading form of submissiveness.[75] Furthermore, Aquinas's account of the humility we should bear towards others fails to resemble Hume's description of meanness. As I will explain in Chapter Six and as I indicated in Chapter One, Thomistic humility before others can be made intelligible largely on the basis of ordinary human flourishing, without having recourse to faith in revelation; it would be something akin to but richer than Hume's description of modesty—a just recognition of our dependency and weaknesses, a posture which makes us more receptive to learning from and properly relying upon others.[76]

It seems, then, that Hume's critique of humility is a bit of a straw man if it is meant as an objection to Christian humility in general, for his portrayal of humility roughly depicts only one of the major branches of Christian theology in the West, and he fails to engage what I think is a better version of Christianity and, accordingly, of Christian humility. When we move beyond semantic differences between Hume and Aquinas, we see that there is much agreement between them with respect to virtues and vices pertaining to the self. Both Aquinas and Hume regard having a sense of dignity as virtuous. Both affirm that it is right (i.e., not viciously prideful) to approve of goodness in oneself.[77] Both think that having a stable, secure selfhood is morally significant.[78] Both also see the importance of having a true sense of our weaknesses as well (though as

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[75] Analogously the non-theistic moral realist finds it dignifying, not degrading, to practice "submitting" to the demands of morality as she seeks to grow in virtue.

[76] I will briefly develop a naturalistic account of humility in Chapter Six.

[77] See Aquinas' discussion of magnanimity in ST II-II:129.

[78] See Aquinas' discussion of the relation between magnanimity and security in ST II-II:129.7, in the question entitled "Whether Security Belongs to Magnanimity?"

I will explain in later chapters, Aquinas understands the significance of this attitude more than does Hume). While much of what Hume calls noble pride, Aquinas calls magnanimity, and much of what Hume calls modesty, Aquinas calls humility, there are many core phenomena pertaining to ways of relating to ourselves that they applaud and condemn in unison.

There is a good deal still to elucidate, however, with respect to just what Hume and Aquinas take to be virtuous and vicious stances towards the self in our own self-assessments, in relation to others, and in relation to God (or in Hume's case, to the (incoherent) conception of God as portrayed by 'revealed religion,' specifically Christianity). I have tried very briefly to highlight areas in which they broadly agree so as to explore, in the remainder of the dissertation, what is really at stake in their conceptions of pride and humility. Indeed, despite widespread agreement, some significant and interesting differences remain, which, as I will show, follow from their respective secular and religious perspectives. In the chapters to come, then, I will explore just how their rival views regarding whether a transcendent moral source is irrelevant (and even harmful) or necessary to a flourishing human life factor into their accounts of pride and humility. I will also consider, in turn, what difference it might make to flourishing if the self is conceived solely 'immanently' in relation to other human persons or as also standing in relation to God.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE PASSION OF PRIDE AND PROBLEMS FOR
FLOURISHING

*"Our reputation, our character, our name are considerations of vast weight and
importance; and even the other causes of pride; virtue, beauty and riches; have little
influence, when not seconded by the opinions and sentiments of others"* (T 2.1.11.1, 206)

*"There are few persons, that are satisfy'd with their own character, or genius, or fortune,
who are not desirous of showing themselves to the world, and of acquiring the love and
approbation of mankind"* (T 2.2.1.9, 215)

*"Upon comparing ourselves with others, as we are every moment apt to do, we find we
are not in the least distinguish'd"* (T 2.1.6.5, 191)

*"...being conscious of a great partiality in our own favour, we are peculiarly pleas'd
with any thing, that confirms the good opinion we have of ourselves, and are easily
shock'd with whatever opposes it"* (T 2.1.11.9, 209)

The central interest in this dissertation is to consider what is at stake for human

flourishing in Hume's attempt to account for ethics without depending upon answers to

any larger metaphysical and religious questions. Christian thinkers had insisted in various

ways that since God is our final end, it is impossible for God to be ethically irrelevant or

to make no crucial difference to human flourishing. On the Christian view, God is

necessary to individual flourishing because, as Augustine put it, our ultimate rest and

happiness is only found in God, and God is important for communal flourishing insofar

as openness to God leads to love of neighbor. Hume, on the other hand, saw the potential

of revealed religion—particularly Christianity—to undermine both individual and

communal flourishing, and he arguably sought, in part, to mitigate those threats precisely

by developing his secular account of ethics.

I have been using Hume's reversal and redefinition of the Christian categories of

pride and humility as a lens through which to explore the relationship between religion,

morality, and human flourishing. Thus far I have shown how Hume's reversal of the placement of pride and humility in the catalogue of the virtues and vices carries with it important insights into the harmful effects that religion (namely, Christianity) can have on human life. Correspondingly, I have emphasized some gains of Hume's secular perspective. In the final chapters, however, I want to explore some of the losses that come with Hume's attempt to bracket out religious questions, losses that ironically become evident upon a deeper exploration of Hume's account of pride and humility.

My focus in this chapter thus will be to examine Hume's account of the passions of pride and humility and to show how the normal operation of these passions, as Hume correctly sees, accounts for much of what undermines flourishing, such as moral blindness, crippling shame, rivalries and factions. In the Chapters Five and Six I will then be in a position to consider the resources that a Humean and Christian humanist perspective has for dealing with these problems. As I will show, Hume's account of virtuous pride and a Christian humanist account of humility are centrally bound up in the sorts of answers that they are able to give.

I. The Passions of Pride and Humility

In order to provide the necessary background for discussing the threats to flourishing that are rooted in our natural desire for a stable pride before others, I begin by presenting Hume's account of the passions of pride and humility given in Book II of the *Treatise*. Although I considered Hume's account of these passions in the previous chapter, because my aim there was to present Hume's account of pride and humility as *character traits*, my presentation of the *passions* was accordingly brief. In order, however, to explore the sorts of problems for flourishing that arise due to our desire to

think well of ourselves (i.e., our desire for pride), in this chapter I will focus on Hume's

account of these passions, looking especially at the role of intersubjectivity in our own

self-evaluations and the significance of these passions for human motivation.

Additionally, while in the last chapter my aim was to present *Hume's* account of pride

and humility, here my concern is to articulate the *nature* of pride and humility as passions

and the nature of their role in some of the problems for flourishing that I wish to explore

in section *II*. I thus will be attempting to clarify, in some cases to correct, and also to

further develop Hume's analyses of these passions as is relevant to the sorts of issues I

want to raise.

a. The Nature of Pride and Humility as Passions

Hume discusses the passions of pride and humility in Book II of the *Treatise*. The

purpose of Book II is to identify the principles that account for the ordinary operation of

the passions as part of his larger project to provide a science of human nature and, in

Book III, to show how ethics is founded upon the passions.[1] The significance of pride and

humility in Hume's account of the passions is indicated by the fact that they are the first

passions that Hume discusses, they are discussed in great detail, and they play an

important role in explaining other passions, such as envy and malice. In this section I

want to present and expand upon Hume's account, and I hope to do so in such a way as to

convince the reader that Hume is right to see these passions as crucial to understanding

human psychology and motivation.

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[1] See Árdal (1966) for an extensive treatment on the relationship of Hume's account of the passions in Book II to his account of the ethics in Book III. See also Árdal's response to Davidson's (1976) article on pride where he observes that the differences between their interpretations of Humean pride are due to the fact that he attends to the relationship between the passions in II and Hume's moral philosophy in III, whereas Davidson does not (1989, 389, 393).

i. The Basic Structure of Pride and Humility

Recall from the previous chapter that Hume describes the passion of pride as a

pleasurable impression of oneself.[2] As part of his project to provide a science of human

nature and thereby to identify the principles that can make sense of the numerous

instances of pride (see T 2.1.3.1, 184-85), Hume observes that several components must

be present for pride to occur. First, and most obviously, there must be a self who feels the

pride; Hume calls the self the 'object' of pride (T 2.1.2.2, 182). Second, there must also

be a 'cause' of pride; that is, there must be a basis or reason for pride to arise.[3] The cause

of pride includes the 'subject' of the pride and the 'quality' that inheres in the subject (T

2.1.2.6, 183). The subject is that about which the person feels proud, such as her

character traits, bodily appearance, or property and possessions. For the subject to be an

effective cause of pride, however, it must have some quality that gives the recipient of

pride a pleasing sentiment, such as beauty, virtue, or usefulness. Third, there must be a

significant relationship between the cause and the would-be recipient of pride in order for

the passion of pride to arise. We may take pleasure in the intelligence of wit or in the

beauty of a garden, but if we are not witty and the garden is in no way related to us, then

neither does our pleasure transfer to pride.[4] The passion of humility relies upon the same

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[2] See the third footnote in chapter three where I discuss the apparent discrepancy between Hume's claim in Book II that pride is an impression of the self with his claim in Book I that we have no impression of the self.

[3] Davidson interprets Hume's claim that there must be a "cause" of pride as a *reason* for the pride; in other words, the cause makes the pride intelligible (1976, 744). Likewise, Árdal summarizes Hume's account by saying, "Pride is to Hume a favourable evaluation of oneself for a reason" (1989b, 389). Although Hume favors the third-personal language of 'cause' in his attempt to give a science of human nature, he does speak of "reasons" for pride and humility in T 2.1.2.2, 182. I say more about issues surrounding the language of 'cause' versus 'reason' in footnote #6.

[4] Notice that when the subject of the pride is the characteristic of the agent, the relationship between the subject and object of pride is one of identity (as Davidson puts it, "the subject is the proud person himself" (1976, 746), as with pride over one's wit). This can be contrasted with cases where the subject of pride is external to the object (e.g., pride in one's garden). Davidson proposes that it is simpler to drop Hume's distinction between the 'subject' and 'object' of pride altogether and to see all forms of pride as

components, except that it is a negative impression of the self, and it is caused by a

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reflecting in some way upon a property of the self. He suggests that the structure of the person's pride-causing belief has the form "I…," where the predicate that can stand in for the dots may or may not refer to some object external to the agent (1976, 746). He takes this form to be superior because it builds the relationship between the self and that of which self is proud into the central belief that is the cause of pride. Furthermore, Davidson thinks that his revision better captures that the belief needed to cause the pride is not a belief about the subject of the pride but about the self. That is, for Davidson, even in cases where the cause of pride is external to the self, it is something about the self that accounts for the pride: I am proud not of my *beautiful house* but of myself as a *possessor* of a beautiful house, he insists. Davidson observes that this modification of Hume's account allows us to explain how someone could be proud of an ugly house, even while disliking ugliness. It would not make sense to say that he is proud of the *house* (qua ugly), but if, for example, he believes that it is virtuous to be unconcerned about one's surroundings, it is clear that he is proud of the property he believes *he* has—in this case, a virtuous lack of concern for external goods as revealed by being the owner of the ugly house (see 1976, 746).

Árdal thinks, contrary to Davidson, that Hume's distinction between subject and object is an important one, and he therefore rejects Davidson's revision of Hume, which makes the cause of pride always about the praiseworthiness of the self (1989b, 388-89). (Baier also defends Hume's distinction against Davidson (1978, 31-32), but for my purposes, I need not recount her reasons here.) Árdal maintains that Hume's distinction is especially helpful for two reasons. First, it seems to have greater power for articulating a range of phenomena of pride. Namely, there seems to be something importantly different between one's pride in her own characteristics versus a Canadian's pride in her hockey team (1989b, 391) or an Icelander's pride in her country (1989b, 393), since the former pride rests more on our own initiative, whereas the latter two causes of pride depend upon the worthiness of something external to the self (the team and the country's land and culture). Second, because Hume's distinction is better able to capture this difference, it is helpful for identifying when pride is justified. For pride to be justified the subject must actually have the value that it is believed to have and the relation between the subject and self must be such that the pride is warranted (see 1989, 391). In many cases when the subject of pride is external to rather than a characteristic of the self, one's pride is justified if it rightly recognizes that the praiseworthiness of the pride is indeed not of one's own making. For example, he says that when Canadians are proud of their hockey team or Icelanders are proud of their country, their pride, though just, is rightly about the praiseworthiness of the team or country, not themselves. Davidson builds the (believed) praiseworthiness of the self into his revised Humean account of pride, whereas as Árdal argues that "what constitutes a reason for pride differs from reasons that justify praise" (1989b, 393), maintaining that in certain cases a person may rightly take pride in something without for that reason being herself praiseworthy.

I follow Árdal in upholding Hume's distinction and in thinking both that it better captures the variable instances of pride and that it is useful for assessing the adequacy of pride. It does seem, for example, that when a father is appropriately proud of his daughter, he is primarily proud of *her*, not of himself as her father (as Davidson's revision would require us to say). If he were to feel pride in his daughter's accomplishments as though they were primarily his doing, it would seem that his pride in her would be misdirected and viciously excessive (though, of course, parents do usually play some role in their children's success and may feel a proper satisfaction with respect to being a good parent). On the other hand, a father who feels no pride in his daughter's accomplishments is also blameworthy for failing to have the appropriate bonds of love with his daughter such that he, through the expanded identity of love, shares in her success. While I thus do think that Davidson is wrong to insist that pride is always about the praiseworthiness of the self, I nevertheless think that Davidson's attempt to simplify Hume touches upon something that I think is important about pride—namely, that there is an identification of oneself with that of which one takes pride, and in that sense pride, even when its cause is external, always reveals something about oneself and what one values. Accordingly, I think that Árdal is not quite correct to say that an individual Icelander who is proud of Iceland should not feel praiseworthy herself for her country (1989b, 393). It seems to me that because of her expanded identity, which encompasses participation in her country's heritage, she can justifiably take pride in *herself* qua Icelander, so long as she recognizes that the praiseworthiness of being Icelandic depends on the praiseworthiness of her *heritage*. (I talk briefly about pride and identity in *I.a.ii.*) The way in which pride arises with a view to our collective identities plays an important role in the formation of social faction, as I will explain in *II*.

painful quality of some subject that stands in relation to the self. For instance, we feel

pained by ugliness and cowardice and, thus, if we regard ourselves as unattractive or

cowardly, we will feel a similar pain with respect to ourselves.[5]

Although Hume perhaps does not stress this point enough insofar as he takes a

third-personal, scientific perspective in his description of the passions, it is clear that

pride and humility can only arise if the beliefs and sentiments of the agent are engaged.[6]

A person's house may in fact be beautiful and even more beautiful than his neighbors',

but that person will not feel pride in his house unless *he* sees it as beautiful. Regardless of

how a subject would be evaluated from the general view, it is ultimately the agent's own

evaluation of the related subject that will be decisive for whether and the extent to which

pride or humility emerges for him.

It is the way in which the agent's evaluations may differ from the would-be

evaluations issued from the general survey that allows for the possibility of ill-founded

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[5] I follow Davidson (1976, 750) and Árdal (1989b, 388) in rejecting Hume's atomistic psychological account of pride whereby the self-approval of pride seems to involve two "atoms" of experience (namely, the reference to the self and the pleasurable impression of pride). I nevertheless also agree with both that the basic structure of pride can be separated from Hume's atomism and, when done so, provides an accurate and insightful account of the dynamics of pride and humility in human life.

[6] All major commentators (e.g., Davidson 1976, Árdal 1989b, Baier 1978, Gabriele Taylor 1980, and King 1999) agree that pride depends upon the beliefs of the agent (though King, I think wrongly, de-emphasizes belief more than others, as can be seen in his critique of Taylor on p. 130). Indeed, how could it not? Nevertheless, as mentioned in footnote #3, Hume tends to avoid the language of "reasons" when discussing the causes of pride, and I think Hume's preference for the third-personal language of 'cause' is connected to Gabriele Taylor's charge that Hume neglects the first-personal perspective (i.e., the beliefs of the agent) in his account of pride. She points out that Hume gives us examples of cases in which we would expect a person to feel pride or humility but, in fact, variable cases could be imagined where the person, given his or her first-personal perspective, would experience these passions differently than Hume describes. While I do think that Taylor overstates this problem when she claims that Hume "takes a wholly external or objective view of the situation [in his account of pride]; that is, he completely ignores the relevant beliefs of the agent himself" (1980, 388), I also think that Taylor has put her finger on a crucial lack in Hume's account of the passions, which, as I will argue in the next chapter, leads him to be overly optimistic about the extent to which we can derive ethics from the passions while bracketing out the variable metaphysical views that inform our beliefs and values.

and often vicious (i.e., excessive) pride and humility.[7] As discussed in the previous

chapter, mistakes in relevant beliefs and sentiments that are disproportionate to subject's

value both contribute to inadequately grounded pride or humility.[8] Hume suggests this

difference between well-grounded and ill-founded pride in his contrast between a

master's pride in the feast that he hosts and a guest's pride in being present at it. While

Hume implies that the master is justifiably proud for throwing a successful feast, he

indicates that the guest's pride in attending it exceeds its just bounds insofar as it is

generated by "so small a relation" between himself and the cause of pride (T 2.1.6.2,

190). Just as our love can be biased and our sympathy narrow, so too can our pride issue

from partiality, lacking the breadth, refinement, and clarity needed for grounding a well-

founded pride. Indeed, I later argue that our desire for pride is especially vulnerable to

bias and underlies our tendency for bias in our love and sympathy as well.

ii. Modifications to Hume's Account

I have been speaking of pride and humility as involving evaluations, but it is

worth noting that this is not the language Hume tends to employ.[9] Again, given Hume's

aim to provide a science of human nature, he takes the third-personal approach,

emphasizing the role of pleasure and pain in pride and humility rather than that of valuing

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[7] To qualify, not all ill-founded pride is thereby vicious. For instance, if a person receives faulty news of winning an award and feels pride on account of it, her pride is not blameworthy, even though it is based on a mistaken belief. If, however, the source of this false information was reputably unreliable but she, out of a vain desire to believe the news, quickly took it to be true without investigation, then her passion of pride in this instance could be said to express an underlying vicious pride (i.e., a tendency for pride to spring beyond its just bounds).

[8] As explored in the previous chapter, the beliefs relevant to pride and humility could pertain to the cause of the passion or to the strength of the relationship between the cause and agent. We can be mistaken about either or both. (It is worth mentioning that in this respect Hume's account indicates that one must be a good moral judge in order to have well-founded pride, since properly identifying the just grounds for pride is a prerequisite to (or constitutive of) feeling pride appropriately.)

[9] Hume does occasionally use the word value. See T 2.1.2.5, 183, where he says, "Every valuable quality of the mind…are causes of pride and their opposites of humility…"

and disvaluing. But as Davidson rightly points out, Hume needs to say that for pride to arise we must *approve* of the subject of the pride, not merely be pleased by it (1976, 748).[10] Davidson observes, for example, that while we may not be *pleased* that others own houses more beautiful than ours, the fact that we could be proud or humiliated by our house presupposes that we *approve* of beautiful houses (1976, 748). An evaluative judgment, even if it is an implicit one, is necessary for pride.

Davidson's apt correction, however, is one that comports with Hume's overall account of pride. Indeed, Hume's claim that "every cause of pride, by its peculiar qualities, produces a *separate* pleasure, and of humility a *separate* uneasiness" (T 2.1.5, 187, emphasis mine) is interpreted by Hume's commentators to mean that the cause of pride is seen to have worth independent of its relation to the recipient of pride.[11] Hume's language of "separate" pleasure suggests that the pleasure needed to excite pride is the sort of pleasure that is constitutive of an evaluation.[12] Of this special sort of pleasure he says,

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[10] Árdal 1989b concurs saying, that "The two accounts [his and Davidson's] are also in agreement that Hume should have said that the proud person must see the cause of pride as having value rather than as an independent source of pleasure" (388). Gabriele Taylor also agrees with Davidson's critique, pointing out that "it is quite possible to value something without finding it pleasant, and conversely, quite possible to think it agreeable without in the least valuing it. Mere pleasure is here not enough to account for the increase in self-esteem which is so central to pride" (1980, 392-93). (I side with Hume against Taylor, though, in maintaining that valuing something always involves some sentiment of pleasure, however subtle, even while granting that it is possible for the valuable to be difficult and therefore not immediately agreeable.)

[11] See, for example, Davidson (1976, 747-48) and King (1999, 126).

[12] For a helpful interpretation of Hume's account of the nature of moral evaluation, see Árdal (1964). He points out that it is unclear exactly how we should understand the status of evaluations for Hume, given that his associational psychology blurs the typical distinctions we typically make between feelings, beliefs, and judgments (1964, 344). What is clear is that moral (as well as aesthetic) approbation and disapprobation depend upon taking up the general view. Árdal notes that Hume calls approbation and blame "nothing but a fainter and more imperceptible love or hatred" (T 3.3.5.1, 391), but that what distinguishes them for Hume, Árdal says, is that love and hatred can be (and often are) biased whereas approval and disapproval can only arise if you have taken up the general view (1964, 342). Árdal thus thinks that on Hume's account, approval is only genuine approval if it is made from the perspective of the general view, and if it is not, it is merely love and not approval at all, however much a person thinks she is being objective and issuing a positive evaluative judgment (1964, 342). If this interpretation is correct, I

> The very *feeling* constitutes our praise or admiration… We do not infer a character to be virtuous, because it pleases: But in feeling that it pleases after such a particular manner, we in effect feel that it is virtuous. The case is the same as in our judgments concerning all kinds of beauty, and tastes, and sensations. Our approbation is imply'd in the immediate pleasure they convey to us. (T 3.1.2.3, 303)

Since our judgments about virtue as well as "beauty, and tastes, and sensations" are the sorts of examples Hume uses when he discusses the causes of pride, it is only reasonable to suppose that the separate pleasure needed for pride be this special evaluative sort.

That an evaluation, rather than mere pleasure or pain, is needed to evoke pride or humility is also suggested by Hume's claim that the same qualities that cause pride (or humility) in ourselves cause love (or hatred) when we see them in others (T 2.2.1.9, 215-16).[13] James King helpfully calls this Hume's 'parity principle' (1999, 128). According to the parity principle, if a person can feel humility upon recognizing that she takes malicious pleasure in her hated colleague's misfortune, it follows that she negatively evaluates maliciousness as such and thus also would hate (i.e., disapprove of) the maliciousness of others. Thus, although Hume favors the language of pleasure and pain in his account of pride and humility, it is clear that for Hume, as Árdal puts it, "pride, humility, love, and hatred are, when caused by qualities of mind or character, the four basic ways of evaluating people" (1989, 389). Indeed, the parity principle depends upon

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depart in this chapter from Hume's specialized usage of approval and use it in the ordinary sense, wherein approbations can be unjustified. Also, because I want to defer discussions of Hume's meta-ethical positions till the next chapter, I here use the terms evaluations and judgments, without filling out what these would exactly entail for Hume.

[13] See where Hume says, "Since then the same qualities that produce pride or humility, cause love or hatred; all the arguments that have been employ'd to prove, that the causes of the former passions excite a pain or pleasure independent of the passion, will be applicable with equal evidence to the causes of the latter" (T 2.2.1.9, 216).

the "separate pleasure" being an independent valuation, for mere pleasure cannot account

for universality implicit in those values that the parity principle assumes.[14]

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[14] Although I maintain that for Hume pride and humility depend upon an evaluation and one that requires a correspondence between pride and love or humility and hatred, I am unconvinced with regard to King's conclusion that the parity principle implies that the general view (or "a disinterested social perspective" (p. 127)) is built into Hume's account of pride (1999, 126-27). To present King's reasons for holding this view would carry me deep into interpretive issues in Hume that are unnecessary to pursue here. Suffice it to say, however, that I do not think the parity principle entails the impartiality of the general survey. We can imagine, for example, someone who takes pride in being "man of the house" and subjects his wife and children to a dominating form of rule. To be sure, his ability to take pride in this conception of manliness presupposes that he would approve of other men who embody his conception of manhood. Nevertheless, while there is *parity* between his pride and love, his evaluation of what it is to be praiseworthy qua male would not withstand scrutiny from the general view. In other words, I do not think Hume's parity claim commits him to holding that the general view is built into his account of pride and humility. (Correspondingly, nor do I think, as King suggests, that all seeming pride which fails to garner approval from the general view is better termed a "secret relish," which is what he claims we must call the sensible knave's would-be pride in his knavery.) I read Hume as attempting to give a thorough account of the passions and as such, it would seem odd for him to exclude such a prevalent phenomenon as biased or unwarranted pride from his general description of the passion of pride.

I side with Baier against King in interpreting Hume as allowing for biased pride and correspondingly biased love. She says,

> The moral sentiment, restricted in its possible causes to impartially discriminated qualities of mind or actions displaying them, may compete with more partial pride and equally partial love, both of which involve that jealous "comparison" which for Hume is "directly contrary" (T 593 [T 3.3.2.4, 379, Norton edition]) to the generalized sympathy needed to generate the moral sentiment. (1978, 35)

This passage indicates that Baier would agree with my above point that we can have bias in our evaluations, which provide a faulty basis for both pride and love (i.e., that we can have a distorted value judgment that nevertheless follows the parity principle). I think this bears itself out in her discussion of biased pride, even though in the example she gives, it initially appears that biased pride presents a breach in the parity principle. In her example a person takes pride in her illicitly financed fine house, even while recognizing the morally deplorable manner in which the house was obtained (1978, 35). This would seem to suggest that the homeowner approves of herself even though she would disapprove of others who have illicitly financed houses, thereby breaking the parity principle. But Baier rightly observes that instead there are two points of view operative here causing the phenomenon that Hume discusses when he speaks of contrary feelings coexisting like oil and vinegar (1978, 36). I think we can see thus that the parity principle holds in both viewpoints here: the homeowner's judgment that her behavior is wrong should evoke humility (just as it would prompt hatred/disapproval of the same action in another), but she seeks to keep such a judgment from the forefront of her mind, attending instead to her positive evaluation of owners of beautiful houses and herself as such an owner. To truly attend to the way in which her house was obtained would presumably cancel the pride she feels in its beauty, but even amidst her self-deceived failure to draw this inference it seems clear that her inadequately grounded pride in her beautiful house (*qua* beautiful house, not *qua* illicitly financed) upholds the parity principle.

The possibility of biased pride (which either is founded on distorted judgments of value or fails to be properly corrected by other relevant pride-curbing assessments) is crucial to the general argument that I want to make in *II*. For now I will say that Hume seems to allow for biased pride by the very fact that he distinguishes between virtuous (i.e., well-founded) pride and vicious (i.e., excessive) pride in T 3.3.2 and also in that, as I will discuss in *II.*, he traces certain mistaken judgments to our over-reaching tendency to pride. But even *if* King is correct that the general view is built into Hume's account of pride—and I admit that certain passages lend support his interpretation—still the phenomenon of biased, ill-founded positive self-feeling (both individual and collective) causes significant problems for human flourishing that must be

In addition to Davidson's point that Hume should have said we must *approve* of the subject of the pride for the pride to arise, it also sheds considerable light on the nature of pride if we look at the particular type of evaluations that are usually operative in an experience of pride. Specifically, I want to draw upon Charles Taylor's distinction between 'strong' and 'weak' evaluations (1985, 16-17) and show that strong evaluations are often, if not always, needed for pride to arise. Strong evaluations are qualitative evaluations of worth that are seen as normative for our desires. Strong evaluations employ categories such as noble or base, higher or lower, virtuous or vicious, more or less refined, and we see them as corresponding to different modes of life—e.g., as worthwhile versus regrettable, as genuinely fulfilling versus empty, as deep versus shallow, as authentic versus inauthentic, as artful versus crude. These sorts of evaluations always come in essentially comparative pairs: noble is always contrasted with base, and so on. Weak evaluations, by contrast, are judgments that *x* is superior to *y* because of *x*'s ability to yield maximal satisfaction. In a weak evaluation one option is only contingently better than the other based on what we happen to desire and what would happen to be the most advantageous way to achieve our desired ends.

When, for example, a person chooses between vanilla and chocolate ice cream, and she judges chocolate to be the superior choice since it will better fill her current craving, she is making a weak evaluation. If her companion chooses vanilla, she does not condemn his choice as shallow or wicked; she sees him merely as having a different preference than she does.[15] If, on the other hand, she is considering whether to lie in order

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addressed. It is this phenomenon that I will explore in *II*, whether it be better termed Humean pride or "secret relish" will be immaterial to the issues I want to raise.

[15] If, strangely enough, she regards those who choose chocolate as expressing an appreciation for richness thereby indicating a more cultivated sensibility than those who choose vanilla, then she has made a

to attain some desired end, she manifests moral obtuseness if she thinks of the

alternatives solely in weak evaluative terms—i.e., if she sees lying or truth-telling as

indifferent alternatives to be judged as better or worse solely by virtue of which will

better fulfill her desires. Rather, most would hold that she mistakes the nature of the

decision unless she is able to strongly evaluate that lying is a base temptation even if it

affords a more favorable outcome and that truthfulness is honorable even if it causes her

pain.

It seems to me, as I will soon argue, that pride usually depends at some level upon

strong evaluation—a point that will become very important in the next chapter. In

Hume's explicit account, pride depends upon the agent having merely a "separate

pleasure" with respect to pride's cause. If we look, however, at the sort of evaluations

implicit in Hume's examples of the causes of pride, most clearly involve strong

evaluations. Two persistent causes of pride, Hume observes, are virtue and beauty (of

one's body, of the excellence of strength and vitality, or of one's possessions) (T 2.1.7,

193-95; T 2.1.8, 195-98), both of which are strong evaluative terms. Virtue is seen not

just as a personal preference but as categorically and normatively praiseworthy and

constitutive of a higher mode of life, such that a failure to praise virtue would be seen as

a deficiency.[16] (We see this not just in virtues we tend to regard as centrally important,

such as benevolence or justice. We also see the strong evaluations implicit in less

significant though nonetheless praiseworthy excellences of mind, such as our sense that

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strong evaluation in a domain where most regard it to be appropriately limited to weak evaluation. Most
areas of choice can be interpreted in either strongly or weakly evaluative terms. Which sorts of decisions
are seen as properly involving one sort of evaluation or the other can itself be contentious.

[16] The actual meta-ethical status of virtues and vices as well as the nature of moral evaluations for
Hume will be discussed in the next chapter. My point here is one about how strong evaluations are
experienced, not about their actual status or whether the normative demand we experience them to have is
in fact justified.

wit is qualitatively superior to slowness of mind.) Beauty also is not a weak evaluative

category to be understood in terms of mere preference; it is seen as qualitatively superior

to its counterpart of ugliness or deformity. Although not all strongly valued goods are

equally valuable and do not warrant the same degree of pride (e.g., courage is more

important and pride-worthy than wit or a beautiful appearance), it is evident that each of

these causes of pride usually involve strong evaluation on the part of the agent.[17]

Some of Hume's examples of the causes of pride are less clearly strongly

evaluative, however. Hume cites, for instance, riches and power (see T 2.1.3.4, 184) as

causes of pride, and one might well argue that a person could judge these to be good

merely because of their usefulness in satisfying our preferences (weak evaluation) rather

than their contribution to a qualitatively higher mode of life (strong evaluation). To this it

may be observed, however, that since so much of human life falls under the domain of

strong evaluation, we are prone to evaluate that which tends to fulfill human desire as

being *qualitatively* better. The 'riches' of which the wealthy are proud tend to signify for

us not just material possessions but a grandness of life that stands opposed to poverty,

want, need. The 'power' that causes pride in the powerful tends to signify, for example,

not merely a greater ability to gratify one's desires (see T 2.1.10.11 205), but a position

of strength (and often prestige or honor) that opposes impotence or weakness. More

importantly, even if we could keep strong evaluative judgments at bay when considering

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[17] It is certainly possible to give reductive accounts of virtue and beauty that would collapse them into weak evaluations—e.g., by claiming that what we call virtue and beauty are those characteristics and attributes that are *quantitatively* better for their tendency to produce pleasure (see utilitarianism). Hume's own account tends to be reductive as well—a point I will address in Chapter Five. Nevertheless, in our lived experience, we regularly make *qualitative* distinctions of worth and, as I soon suggest above, it is unclear that a merely weakly valued good is sufficient to generate pride, or at least to ground a pride of any significance.

wealth and power or other such potential causes of pride, it is difficult to see why either

would serve as much cause for pride if they were only weakly valued.

We can see this point if we imagine a person who wins the lottery and must

decide whether to keep the money or to give it away. Suppose that she does not regard

the money and the life it can provide as holding any intrinsically qualitative worth, nor

does she strongly evaluate that it would be morally noble to give the money to those who

need help. (If she were deciding between these two qualitative goods, the character of her

decision would be drastically different—involving sacrifice of one strongly valued good

to the other—than if her choice was made solely in weakly evaluative terms.) Imagine

instead that she considers whether she should keep the money merely by weighing

whether it will help her better attain the desires she happens to have. She speculates that

wealth will afford her with ease and luxuries on the one hand, but on the other, it could

change her relationship to her friends and diminish the satisfaction that comes from

working for certain goods in her life. If she decides to keep the money because she

ultimately judges that it will better fulfill the desires she happens to have, her choice is

akin to the person who chooses chocolate over vanilla ice cream. But then it becomes

unclear why she would take pride in wealth (or in being a chocolate-lover). Only if

wealth were seen as qualitatively better (or if loving chocolate were seen as indicative of

a more cultivated sensibility) would it make sense to feel pride in it.[18] Indeed, on what

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[18] Nor could she be proud of deciding to give away the money unless she strongly evaluated that doing so was qualitatively better than keeping her winnings for herself. If her decision were *solely* based on the judgment that wealth would decrease her happiness, she would have no real grounds for self-approval in her decision to give it away—unless of course she strongly values being a good calculator of what will satisfy her wants and sees her decision as an instance of good calculation. Kierkegaard's Aesthete is a character that sees alternative options primarily in weak evaluative terms but nevertheless strongly evaluates and takes pride in being an expert in judging what will best satisfy his desires.

grounds could one be legitimately proud of a mere preference unless one evaluates that preference as expressing some strongly valued good?[19]

That pride usually involves strong evaluations is also suggested by Hume's claim that there is parity between what we take pride in and what we love in others, for this parity suggests the categorical character found in strong evaluations that is lacking from weak evaluative ones.[20] There is nothing about that which I judge to be good merely *because* I prefer it that ensures that I will approve of that preference in another. While I may tend to approve of those who share my preferences, there is no reason why I *must* approve of them or disapprove of those who do not share my preferences. But strongly valued goods are otherwise; one regards them as worthy of approbation wherever they are found. Thus, in order for Hume to endorse the parity principle, it seems he must implicitly have had strongly valued goods in mind in his discussions of pride and love.[21] This is obscured, however, not only because he conflates strong and weak evaluation but especially because he, in his attempt to give a science of the passions, prefers and, if he is to be consistent, must employ language that is more at home in weak evaluations.[22]

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[19] Perhaps an exception to this could be the pride and humility felt solely by means of social perception. The person who inadvertently responds out of turn at a ceremony blushes with humility at the way her voice hangs alone in the air, noticed by everyone in the room. Her humility is likely aroused more by social attention being turned on her foible than by failing to live up to something she strongly values. While it is possible for humility to arise in this way, however, it lacks the existential significance of humility that arises upon being unaligned with a strongly valued good. Needless to say, the same is true for pride.

[20] To clarify, by categorical I do not mean that it involves a universal moral demand, as does Kant's use of 'categorical' when he defines the categorical imperative. To see art as a strongly valued good in human life, for example, is not to think that everyone must become artists. It does mean, however, that I will approve of (good) artists *qua* artist when I encounter them. It also means that I think that art is a good that should be recognized by others and that a person lacks adequate formation if she fails to see its importance.

[21] On Hume's account, the parity principle is founded upon his contention that we share a stable human nature and hence find the same sorts of things agreeable and disagreeable; hence, as I discuss in Chapter Five, it only mimics strong evaluation.

[22] Since Hume discusses the pride and humility of animals who have no capacity for strong evaluation (e.g., swans, turkeys, peacocks, nightingales (T 2.1.12.4, 212)), my claim that Hume's account of pride usually implicitly depends upon strong evaluation needs further explanation. On the one hand,

One crucial instance in which Hume clearly depends upon pride that is grounded in strong evaluations is in his response to the sensible knave. The knave, as mentioned in the last chapter, is one who is able to ferret out ways to exploit others for his own ends without serious risk of punishment. As we saw, this poses a potential problem for Hume's ethics insofar as it raises the question of whether he has the resources to explain why the sensible knave would be motivated to be just if he can get away with securing his private pleasure by unjust means. Recall that Hume's response to this challenge was to maintain that we should be motivated to act virtuously, instead of to embrace knavery, because only through virtue can we take "invaluable enjoyment" (i.e., pride) in our character; and such pride is more valuable than the "worthless toys and gewgaws" (E IX.II, 283) that are won unjustly.

Notice that the sensible knave could, in his knavery, be interpreted as a weak evaluator with respect to his deliberations: his desired end is pleasure, and he judges that being unjust in particular instances is better because it will be more expedient in helping him to achieve his end. Hume's response to the motivational problem that the knave presents involves making the strong evaluative judgments that the knave's choice involves "villainy,…baseness,…treachery and roguery" and that the life of virtue is "without price" (E IX.II, 283). Virtue, Hume thereby suggests, is incommensurable with,

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Gabriele Taylor may simply be right to argue that the "complexity of thought and assessment in fact involved in pride" makes implausible Hume's claim that pride and humility are to be found throughout the animal kingdom (1980, 401). It does seem, however, that nonhuman animals experience pride somewhat analogously to human pride. I think we can reconcile the strong evaluative character of human pride with Hume's analogous attribution of pride to nonhuman animals by attending to Hume's remark that since nonhuman animals have no concept of virtue and vice or property, the causes of this pride must be related to the body—e.g., its beauty, strength, or swiftness—rather than the mind (T 2.1.12.5, 212). This suggests that for the nonhuman animal, pride is dependent solely on the pleasure of flourishing as the sort of creature that it is. Thus, if Hume is correct to see an analogy here, we might maintain that since humans do have strongly evaluative concepts that nonhuman animals do not have, pride and humility is usually different for humans in precisely this way.

because qualitatively higher than, the sort of external goods and "feverish, empty amusements of luxury and expense" that the knave seeks to attain (E IX.II, 283). Hume's response to the knave thus is not primarily that the knave has calculated wrongly and that in light of our human nature the life of virtue is in fact a better method for yielding maximal pleasure. Rather, Hume seems to see the life of virtue as a strongly valued good such that it is normative for our desires. The knave does not just have a preference for acting in a way that will yield less pleasure than virtue; his unconcern for justice is "base" and "villainous." (Whether Hume's ethic founded on a science of human nature is sufficient to support such strongly evaluative claims will be an important point of discussion in the next chapter, however.) Thus, Hume's reply to the problem of the knave implies that we should be motivated to virtue not only because, given human nature, it is the most probable route to happiness, but perhaps more importantly because—if we agree with his strong evaluative claim about the worth of the virtuous life, and Hume assumes that his readers do—we will not want to be base, villainous characters.

An important reason that a prideful concern for our character can be a powerful motive for virtue (or for pursuing whatever we strongly value over and above what we judge as lesser goods) is connected to the way in which, as Charles Taylor points out, personal identity is essentially bound up with our strong evaluations (1985, 34).[23] This is especially true, he observes, of those strong values that are seen as inseparable from ourselves and which, if lost, would cause a breakdown of agency, an identity crisis of a particularly deep and disorienting sort (1985, 35). The knave is not motivated to pursue justice over and against the more immediate pleasure he would have by injustice

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[23] By personal identity, I refer not to a philosophical account of identity (the sort of which Hume shows to be empirically unidentifiable) but to how we define ourselves when we specify what is most central to who we are.

presumably because he does not strongly value justice. Its value has no pull on his identity: "his heart rebel[s] not against such pernicious maxims, … he feel[s] no reluctance to the thoughts of villainy" (E IX.2, 283).[24] (Perhaps he instead strongly values being a powerful, independent, and clever person, able to rise above convention; these, then, will be the values that form his identity and would have particular power to motivate him over and against conflicting preferences.) On the other hand, if a person sees *justice* to be admirable, noble, right, then this says something about herself, i.e., that *she* values justice, and that being just is important to her sense of the kind of person that she is or wants to become more fully. Moreover, the extent to which she strongly values justice is proportional to the centrality it holds on her identity. It is primarily because our notion of ourselves is linked to strong values in this way that prideful concern for our character can motivate us to resist the pull of immediate self-interest.[25] But it also implies that for pride to be *morally* motivating, one's identity must be informed by the qualitative importance of the ethical life in the first place.

In the previous chapter I pointed out that Hume (rightly) sees that the passions of pride and humility matter acutely to us. The pleasure of pride is inherently desirable, and even more so because it is a pleasure that pertains to our very *self*. Now with the category of strong evaluation at our disposal, I think that we are better able to see that it is

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[24] If he did strongly value justice then he would no longer be the knave that Hume presents but, rather, a person who struggles with *akrasia* or a self-deceived lack of attention to the incongruence between his actions and moral judgments.

[25] Enlightened self-interest may also, but to a lesser degree, afford the motivational power to resist temptations to injustice and the like. The weak evaluation that it is better (i.e., more expedient but not higher or more noble) to act for one's enlightened self-interest cannot, however, be incorporated into one's identity in such a way as to constitute a concern for character when acting from such motives. If, however, one strongly values being enlightened about one's desires, being strong enough to resist immediate temptation, and so on, then it can then become a matter of pride to act from enlightened self-interest. As I suggested in footnote #18, we see a case of the person who strongly values acting from enlightened self-interest, I think, in Kierkegaard's Aesthete; he feels contempt for the stupidity of those who act on brute impulse and enjoys seeing himself as artful and intelligent in his pursuit of pleasure.

primarily the *quality* of our self that is appreciated when we feel pride, and the

significance of pride to us corresponds to the significance that we take the cause of pride

to have. We may value beauty and be proud of our beauty; nevertheless, humility may be

our dominating self-feeling if we fail in some important way to live up to a value that we

regard as much more significant than beauty—e.g., if we judge ourselves to be petty or

foolish. There is perhaps nothing more central to a good life than the ability to feel

genuine self-approval with respect to one's most cherished values and nothing more

crushing than humility caused by failure to live up to what we regard as most worthy,

despite the presence of other goods.[26]

iii. Sources of Pride

The importance of pride to a good life is further appreciated when we observe

with Hume that the self-evaluative passions are pervasive in human psychology, making

it thereby difficult to forget our need for pride when we lack the sources that could

sustain it. To be sure, on Hume's account we cannot avoid self-evaluative feeling and,

moreover, there is a strong inertia towards the self in our emotional lives.[27] The specific

passions of pride and humility are, Hume says, "determin'd [i.e., structured so as] to have

the self for their *object*, not only by a natural but also by an original principle [of human

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[26] This is in part why the Stoics will go so far as to say that a virtuous person can be happy on the racks, for virtue bestows the person with the happiness of self-approval that comes with being good. It is also why the humility of failing to live up to some strongly held good can be a pain of the worst sort. We might think of Aristotle's claim that those who have done many terrible actions "hate and shun life because of their vice, and destroy themselves" (NE IX.4, 143). We see this in Judas, whose shame in betraying Jesus drove him to suicide, or in how intensely the mysterious visitor in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* suffered (and, indeed, contemplated suicide) after murdering a woman he loved but could not have (304-12).

[27] He claims, for instance, "the idea of ourselves is always intimately present to us…" (T 2.2.4.7, 229) and that we have a "great propensity…to pride" (T 2.2.4.8, 229).

nature]" (T 2.1.3.2, 184).[28] In other words, the mind's penchant for turning towards itself

is not only "constant and steady" (i.e., natural) but unalterably rooted in our nature (i.e.,

an original principle). This explains Hume's observation that "*any* thing, that gives a

pleasant sensation, and is related to self, excites the passion of pride, which is also

agreeable, and has self for its object" (T 2.1.5.8, 189, emphasis mine, see also T 2.1.9.5,

199).[29] Self-evaluative feeling arises readily as we engage with others and the world.

Since the passion of pride is highly and persistently desired, it is worth discussing

more fully what Hume's account implies for how pride can be secured. It implies, first,

that we cannot directly "give" ourselves this passion by force of will.[30] Pride is and must

be supported by causes, and in the absence of such support, the passion of pride cannot be

sustained. As Hume puts it, "daily experience convinces us, that pride requires certain

causes to excite it, and languishes when unsupported by some excellency in the character,

in bodily accomplishments, in cloaths, equipage or fortune" (T 2.1.5.7, 188). It is true

that the momentary passions of pride and humility can settle into dispositions toward

self-approval or self-hatred over time and that these dispositions can seem to be general

and unspecified as to the grounds that undergird them.[31] Hume's account suggests,

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[28] By "original principle" Hume means that we observe it to be true of human nature but that we cannot go any further in our explanation of causes for these principles (see T 1.4.7.5, 173). They are the bedrock principles that can be identified empirically. They help explain the workings of the human mind that depend upon them, but their existence can only be affirmed, for we have no recourse to further principles which could explain them. While, for example, the workings of pride and humility and the principle of comparison help explain forms of envy and malice (T 2.2.8, 240-45) we cannot posit any underlying principle that explains the existence of pride and humility; nevertheless they are undeniably present. Hume regards sympathy as another original principle of human nature (see EPM V.2, 219n1).

[29] See also where Hume says, "*all agreeable objects, related to ourselves, by an association of ideas and of impressions, produce pride, and disagreeable ones, humility*" (T 2.1.6.1, 190).

[30] This stands in contrast to a trend in popular psychology to champion self-esteem and to suggest that it can be sufficiently had by reiterating to ourselves that we are special.

[31] Arnold Isenberg says this point well: "Pride and shame have been defined as feelings, and that is what they are in the isolated act of reflection. But reflection is continual so that the momentary reactions establish themselves as dispositions, affect the structure of personality and modify the life pattern" (1980, 366).

however, that habitual self-esteem or disregard must be nourished by particular passions of pride or humility that necessarily arise on the basis of specific causes. If the disposition to pride is deprived of its support, it deteriorates. This is not to say that we do not play a *role* in the extent to which we feel pride and humility. We may, for example, attend to those things that bolster our pride and avoid dwelling upon those things that excite our humility, we can frame various scenarios in ways that alter the humility we might feel (e.g., conceiving of sexual license not as promiscuity but as a liberated affirmation of the body, and so on), and we can seek to act in such a way as to warrant positive self-assessment. Nevertheless, Hume's account rightly implies that our immediate feelings of pride and humility are not directly under our control.

This is not only because pride and humility are grounded in their causes but also because, as Hume argues, human nature is constituted so as to find certain causes admirable and others odious. Thus, despite our natural desire for pride, we cannot simply decide willy-nilly to praise whatever we find to be true about ourselves. Although I pointed out that in some cases we can seek to frame the phenomena relevant to self-assessment in various ways, still our human nature imposes limits upon the extent to which we can earnestly consider rival interpretations. Hume insists that there is—and indeed his account of ethics depends upon—a general universality in the way that we experience pleasure and pain, such that if certain sorts of pleasures or pains are related to ourselves, we will respectively feel pride or humility.

This is not just because Hume thinks that we will always feel pleasure in relation to the *qualities* of goodness and beauty and pain in relation to badness and ugliness as we experience them. More controversially, Hume expects that there will be a broad

agreement of sentiment about *what* we regard to be good and beautiful or bad and ugly.

He correspondingly thinks that there is near universal concurrence regarding what causes

pride and humility. The following passage is worth quoting in full:

> We may, perhaps, make it a greater question, whether the *causes*, that produce the passion [of pride or humility], be as *natural* as the object [i.e., the self], to which it is directed, and whether all that vast variety proceeds from caprice or from the constitution of the mind? This doubt we shall soon remove, if we cast our eye upon human nature, and consider that in all nations and ages, the same objects still give rise to pride and humility; and that upon the view even of a stranger, we can know pretty nearly, what will either increase or diminish his passions of this kind. If there be any variation in this particular, it proceeds from nothing but a difference in the tempers and complexions of men; and is besides very inconsiderable. Can we ever imagine it possible, that while human nature remains the same, men will ever become entirely indifferent to their power, riches, beauty or personal merit, and that their pride and vanity will not be affected by these advantages?" (T 2.1.3.4, 184)

The force of Hume's claims here is, I think, that certain things (be they character traits,

cultural artifacts, possessions, and so on) just are constitutive of or contribute to a

flourishing human life, and thus we by nature cannot but approve of them since we are

inevitably concerned with our own flourishing and, because we are socially dependent as

well as sympathetically constituted, with the flourishing of society.[32] In light of the

regular and predictable way in which human passions tend to operate, Hume concludes

that human nature is by and large steady and that we share the same fundamental needs,

desires, and enjoyments. (If this were not the case, sympathy would not be possible, nor

would our emotions be intelligible.[33]) Correspondingly, we are bound by our nature to

approve of what improves and disapprove of what hampers human life. We are likewise

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[32] Of course "flourishing" on Hume's account is determined by what fosters pleasure, given the rational, socially-dependent, sympathetically-constituted kinds of beings we find ourselves to be.

[33] If, for example, a person were to respond to kindness with contempt, this negative sentiment towards kindness would be baffling. Such a response could become intelligible were we to find out, for instance, that this person was suspicious that an instance of kindness was really a ploy to manipulate others. If this were the case, though, the negative response would be to the manipulation, not to the kindness as such.

bound to feel pride when we possess those characteristics that we take to be constitutive of flourishing and that we affirm for that reason.

Although Hume insists upon a general agreement about those things that are estimable or blameworthy (and thus about what will cause pride and humility when related to ourselves), in the above passage Hume does concede that there are minor evaluative disagreements, which he traces these to differences of temperament. Elsewhere, however, Hume seems to acknowledge a greater variation of evaluative judgments and has a correspondingly richer account for why such differences occur. "Of the Standard of Taste" looks at the role of cultivation in good evaluative judgments, "A Dialogue" and *The Natural History* suggest the role of religious superstition in corrupting the "natural and usual force of the passions," sections of Book II of the *Treatise* offer an account of how certain emotions can compete with sympathy, causing our evaluations to be skewed (a point I will explore in *II.a.*), and Hume's moral philosophy as a whole is able to account for a large range of cultural differences. It thus turns out that Hume does admit to a greater degree of value differences than the above passage suggests, but this variation of value, nevertheless, Hume sees against a backdrop of widespread agreement that he expects will be relatively stable. The "natural and usual force of the passions" (T 3.3.2.18, 311) operates the way it does because of its origin in human nature, and this ensures that what genuinely contributes to a human happiness will generally be met with approbation (when viewed impartially from the general survey), unless the passions have been inappropriately cultivated or corrupted.

The fact, though, that sentiments can be inappropriately cultivated or corrupted means that it is possible to take pride or humility in the wrong things or to the wrong

extent. Hume, indeed, acknowledges that pride can be ill-founded in these ways when he

distinguishes vicious forms of pride with virtuous ones in *Treatise* 3.3.2.1. The sources

for pride and humility thus need not always be "intrinsic values" (see T 2.2.8.1, 240).[34]

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[34] Hume uses the term "intrinsic value" seven times in the *Treatise*, and he also refers to the "intrinsic merit" (e.g., T 2.1.6.4, 191) or "intrinsic worth" of things (e.g., T 2.2.8.1, 240). However, because Hume's sentimentalist account of value commits him to maintaining that "[o]bjects have absolutely no worth or value in themselves. They derive their worth merely from passion" (ESY 166), the question naturally arises as to what an intrinsic value is for Hume.

The analogy that Hume, following Hutcheson, draws between secondary qualities and values (primarily moral and aesthetic) (THN 3.1.1.26, 301-2; ESY 166n3; LDH # 16, 39-40) is helpful for ascertaining the sense in which values can be said to be intrinsic in a Humean sense. This analogy maintains (at least) that as sensible qualities like taste and color, for example, reside not in objects but are an effect of the way in which our sense organs interact with objects, so too do value-qualities reside in the responses of human sentiments as they interact with objects in reliably stable ways. By this analogy Hume may be suggesting that although the sensible qualities and values reside in the subject rather than the object, there is a kind of objectivity *within* human subjectivity about secondary qualities and values. From *within* the standpoint of the human community, for example, this lemon really is yellow and a hence colorblind person can be wrong about a particular color. Similarly, from within the standpoint of the human community (and when viewed impartially), proper pride really is good, and correspondingly, a person with malformed sentiments can be wrong about its value (as Hume thinks Pascal is when he embraces humility). (See ESY 166n3 for a more complete account of the sense in which secondary qualities [and the values analogous to them] are objective: they are, Hume thinks, equally as real and equally as important *to us* as if they were in the things themselves—i.e., as if they were primary qualities.) I presume, then, that by 'intrinsic' goods Hume is referring to those objects or qualities that human sentiment, being structured as it is, impartially regards as valuable. It would moreover seem on Hume's account that human sentiment is united in regarding certain things to be intrinsically good *because* those things contribute to or are constitutive of flourishing (as can be affirmed from the general view). (See T 2.1.6.4, 191, where Hume points to health as an example of an intrinsic good.)

Obviously not all sentiments point to intrinsic goods, however, and this is not only because our sentiments are strongly prone to bias. Hume usually uses the language of intrinsic merit when he contrasts it with some other principle in human nature that plays a role in shaping our evaluative responses, such as the principle of comparison whereby an uncommon object is seen as having greater value by virtue of its rarity or our tendency to overlook the value of that to which we are accustomed (see T 2.1.6.4, 191). As I have suggested in the previous chapter, although comparative evaluations can obscure our awareness of intrinsic goods, they need not. Comparisons, I argued, are necessary for honing moral sensitivity (and for forming a sense of due pride) because they allow us to recognize greater and lesser goods in relation to each other and in different contexts. Nevertheless, comparisons do have the potential for rendering Hume's ethics more contingent than his analogy between values and secondary qualities suggests. Michael Gill explores some of contingencies implied by Hume's account of comparison (2006, 241-61), and although I think that he overstates his case by neglecting to emphasize that there is a real spectrum of moral and aesthetic grounds for value judgments that underlie our comparatively-informed evaluations (a spectrum that Hume's account of a standard of taste, I think, necessarily depends), there are crucial issues he raises for Hume's moral philosophy that will be discussed in the next chapter.

(Commentators debate about the extent to which Hume intended the analogy between value and secondary qualities to be taken seriously and whether it is plausible in whatever extent he meant it. For helpful discussions of Hume's analogy between value and secondary qualities, see Blackburn (1993, 273-75); Winkler (1996); Sturgeon (2001, especially pp. 14-16, 28-43); and Gill (2006, 241-61). My interpretation of Hume is closest to Winkler's. Blackburn thinks that Hume did not rely on the analogy in his moral philosophy and "could not possibly have done so, for reasons lying deep in his philosophy" (1993, 273), but I think that Winkler successfully shows that Blackburn's interpretation is mistaken and

Disordered, biased, or corrupted sentiment-informed evaluations can also undergird these passions or can prompt us to seek pride in the wrong ways. (In fact I think that this is far more common than Hume's stress on near universal agreement of sentiment would seem to suggest.) The relationship between biased sentiments and pride will be a central topic in section *II*. Before, however, exploring ill-formed pride and its negative consequences for flourishing, Hume's account of pride and humility must be filled out still more by situating these passions in their social context. The perceptions of others, Hume argues, serve as another source for these passions—often congruent with and lending support to the "intrinsic values" that stand behind proper pride but sometimes diverging from them and contributing to the undue pride or humility that will be of interest later in the chapter.

b. Pride and Love of Fame

Hume's account of the passions of pride and humility, which I have sketched above, acquires new dimension and complexity when he calls attention to how these passions are intersubjectively informed. Hume observes that sociality runs deep in human nature, and the phenomena of pride and humility cannot be fully explained apart from appreciating the extent to which our self-assessments are influenced by the perceptions and values of others, for as Hume says, "besides [the] original causes of pride and humility, there is a secondary one in the opinions of others, which has an equal influence on the affections" (T 2.1.11.1, 206). In this section I will explore Hume's observations with respect to the social dynamics pertaining to pride and humility.

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that Hume did take the analogy seriously (see especially 1996, 14-18). As will become clear in Chapter Five, I am not convinced, however, that Hume can ultimately defend this analogy while also cutting off cosmic questions and rejecting a teleological conception of human nature.)

The reason our pride and humility can be both directly and indirectly influenced by others stems from the principle of sympathy (T 2.1.11.1, 206), which Hume thinks is a natural and original principle of human nature.[35] In the previous chapter I presented Hume's account of sympathy so as to show how the virtue of pride enables us to move from our natural, biased sympathy to the wider, more extensive sympathy necessary for moral evaluation. Here I again want to present Hume's initial account of (natural) sympathy in order now to show its effects upon the passions of pride and humility, and therefore upon one's sense of oneself.

Hume thinks that affections arise from sympathy in the following manner: First, the external signs (whether verbal or non-verbal) expressed by a person give me the *idea* of her sentiments. For example, my friend's smile and shining eyes convey to me the idea of her happiness, and this idea is reinforced when she tells me of the good news she received. Second, my idea of the other's sentiment is "converted into an *impression*" in me and furthermore "acquires such a degree of force and vivacity, as to become the very passion itself, and produce an equal emotion, as any original affection" (T 2.1.11.3, 206). That is, the idea of my friend's happiness changes into the feeling of happiness, so that I now feel the same joy that she feels. (Note that Hume's technical meaning of 'sympathy' is broader than everyday usage. Sympathy can refer to feeling any feeling that another has, not merely to feeling along with another in a way that affirms the other's experience. Feeling another's dislike of me is an instance of sympathy for Hume.)

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[35] Hume says, for example, that "no quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than that propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own" (T 2.1.11.2, 206). That he sees this propensity for sympathy as an original principle of human nature is clear from footnote 1 of section V.2 in the *Second Enquiry*, which reads, "It is needless to push our researches so far as to ask, why we have humanity or fellow-feeling with others. It is sufficient, that this is experienced to be a principle in human nature" (EPM V.2, 219n1).

As discussed in Chapter Three, Hume initially describes sympathy as largely passive. In Hume's language the idea of another's emotions simply "converts itself" into the same emotion in the sympathizer. We can think, for instance, of the little boy who "catches" the tears of his big sister, or how, despite our best efforts, we find that we have acquired the grumpy mood of our colleague. It would seem on Hume's initial account of sympathy, merely recognizing another's emotional state can suffice for the other's inner condition to emerge within oneself (though as Hume later points out, our natural sympathetic responses can be interrupted by the principle of comparison). As Hume observes, "A cheerful countenance infuses a sensible complacency and serenity into my mind; as an angry or sorrowful one throws a sudden damp upon me" (T 2.1.11.2, 206). The passive elements of sympathy explain why it is impossible to be wholly unaware of or unaffected by the affective life of those around us—a point that will become important when we look at how sympathy allows us to feel, sometimes quite deeply, others' perceptions of ourselves.

Hume additionally maintains that sympathy affects our thoughts as well as feelings. Among the evidence to which he appeals in order to illustrate our great propensity for sympathy he cites the tendency of children to "embrace every opinion propos'd to them," the fact that "men of the greatest judgment and understanding…find it very difficult to follow their own reason or inclination, in opposition to that of their friends and daily companions," and the "uniformity we may observe in…the turn of thinking of those in the same nation" (T 2.1.11.2, 206). This is in part because, as Hume reminds us in his discussion of sympathy, he had argued in Book I that all ideas are copies of impressions and these "differ only in the degrees of force and vivacity, with

which they strike upon the soul" (T 2.1.11.7, 207). Our ability to receive the ideas/impressions of others and our social inclination to concord with others thus makes us disposed to accept the beliefs of others. As Hume remarks, "Nothing is more natural than for us to embrace the opinions of others," because "*sympathy*…renders all their sentiments intimately present to us and *reasoning*… makes us regard their judgment, as a kind of argument for what they affirm" (T 2.1.11.9, 208-9).

Although sympathy is natural, Hume points out that we do not readily sympathize with all others to the same extent. Hume observes that the degree, depth, and intensity with which we feel another's condition depends upon the resemblance (e.g., shared language, culture, personality) and contiguity (spatial proximity) between ourselves and those with whom we sympathize (T 2.1.11.5-6, 207). The transference of sentiment and opinion, for example, occurs more readily with respect to those that strike us as sharing similar values and ways of viewing the world than those whose beliefs and way of life are more foreign to us. Sympathy also arises more easily with people who are physically close to us. We are more likely, for instance, to be disturbed by the pedestrian before us who got hit by a car than the thought of many more who are suffering from severe political unrest in another part of the world.[36]

That sympathy, especially with those like and near us, plays a large role in our thoughts and feelings (see T 2.1.11.9, 208) is of special importance for Hume's account the passions of pride and humility, for he notes that sympathy "*must have a peculiar*

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[36] While greater sympathy with those similar and close to us is not *de facto* problematic, it is important, as was discussed in Chapter Three, to seek to extend our sympathy with those to whom our initial sympathy would fail adequately to include. Extensive sympathy, as previously mentioned, is essential to taking up the general view from which moral judgments can be made, but also, as I will later suggest, extensive sympathy is important to cultivating a well-founded pride. As I later show, a more narrow sympathy limited to those who are near and like us can work on our natural desire for pride so as to entrench a biased perspective and, in turn, to reinforce this more partial, restricted form of sympathy.

influence, when we judge of our own worth and character" (T 2.1.11.9, 209, emphasis mine). In other words, Hume takes it to be an obvious fact of human nature not only that we register the feelings and opinions of others by way of sympathy but also that they influence us more strongly precisely when they pertain to ourselves. The way in which insightful confirmation or harsh and undue criticism of a youth can respectively shape the trajectory of a person's life for good or for ill insofar as it plays a hand in forming a person's underlying sense of worth is confirmation of Hume's point.

Indeed, although Hume observes that we can and do feel a sense of pride with respect to the cause of pride "itself," the opinions of others, he says, have "an equal influence on the affections." His language on this point is strong: "Our reputation, our character, our name are considerations of vast weight and importance; and even the other causes of pride; virtue, beauty and riches; *have little influence*, when not seconded by the opinions and sentiments of others" (T 2.1.11.1, 206, emphasis mine). The suggestion is that if no one were to care for our virtue, regard us as beautiful, or approve of our riches, it is unlikely that these would evoke any deep feeling of pride (especially the latter two)—and, conversely, the more others approve of us, the more we feel ourselves to be significant.

Hume takes it for granted, however, that others generally *will* approve of our virtue, beauty, riches, and so on (as long as their judgments are not clouded by envy, malice, or value-warping superstitions) because, as discussed above, the principles underlying the natural operation of the passions are rooted in human nature. We, by virtue of being human, just do approve of qualities that are useful or agreeable to ourselves or to others when we have no interfering influences on our passions and

passion-informed evaluations, Hume thinks. In this way, Hume claims that social

approval and blame will be in accord with the causes of pride and humility (T 2.1.11.9,

208), even if social approval can sometimes have greater influence on these passions than

the causes themselves. Nevertheless, the very distinction Hume makes between the cause

of pride and others' approval coupled with what was argued above, that people's value-

judgments can be biased, ill-founded, and disordered (e.g., consider the sensible knave

and Hume's portrayal of Pascal in "A Dialogue"), opens the possibility that others can

affect our sense of pride and humility, even when their attitudes are incongruent with the

genuine grounds for these passions.

I will explore the consequences of when there is divergence between the just

causes of pride and humility and people's actual attitudes of praise and blame more fully

in section *II*. But here I want briefly to point out how it is precisely when the judgments

of others depart from the true grounds for pride or humility that we can more clearly see

just how influential others can be for our sense of self-worth. The impact of others' views

in this way is especially visible with children, who have little capacity for assessing the

judgments of others about themselves and thus are very prone to internalize praise or

disapproval, particularly from the central members of their social world. For example, the

father of Pieter in Alan Paton's *Too Late the Phalarope* dislikes his son's gentleness and

love of flowers. Due to the particular ease with which sympathy occurs in the

parent/child relationship, Pieter deeply *feels* his father's disapproval, and this feeling in

turn evokes humility/shame with respect to what his father regards as his feminine

characteristics. It is unsurprising that although the adult Pieter is able to judge that his

father's opinions of him are improper, he still feels shame at his father's dissatisfaction

and implicitly seeks out the approval of others to substitute for the lack of parental affirmation.

Hume does point out that we do not take to heart others' judgments of ourselves indiscriminately. He says that

> tho' fame in general be agreeable, yet we receive a much greater satisfaction from the approbation of those, whom we ourselves esteem and approve of, than of those, whom we hate and despise. In like manner we are principally mortify'd with the contempt of persons, upon whose judgment we set some value, and are, in a great measure, indifferent about the opinions of the rest of mankind. (T 2.1.11.11, 209)

Certainly we generally do, and should, give more weight to the perceptions of those who know us well enough to have insight into our character and whose judgments we trust to be sound rather than those who lack these qualifications. This point goes some distance in explaining how our sociality and responsiveness to praise and blame is crucial for moral formation and for developing the ability to transcend the ill-formed judgments of those around us. Nevertheless, insofar as we may be poor judges of whom is most worthy of esteem and insofar as the people that are closest and most like us (i.e., those for whom sympathy occurs most readily) may well over- or underrate our merits, Hume leaves open the possibility that our self-assessments can be deeply formed by others in ways that do not fully coincide with, or that even run contrary to, real causes for pride and humility—a point that will be explored in *II*.

A second way in which the social world influences our sense of pride and humility is by providing a context with which the principle of comparison can operate. As Hume points out, our self-assessments are dependent upon how we show up in comparison to those around us. He notes,

> [W]e…judge of objects more from comparison than from their real and intrinsic merit; and where we cannot by some contrast enhance their value, we are apt to overlook even what is essentially good in them. …goods, which are common to all mankind, and have become familiar to us by custom, give us little satisfaction. (T 2.1.6.4, 191)

In other words, widespread goods are less likely to give us pride than those which are rare; commonplace qualities, abilities, or possessions cannot evoke the same sort of pride as can that which sets one apart as special. (We can think of the pride that Hume reports to have felt because of outshining his classmates.[37]) Conversely it would hold that widely shared negative attributes are less likely to cause the same level of humility as those that are uncommon. We tend to take comfort when others struggle as we do, and our shame is more acute when we fail in ways that most do not.[38]

In certain cases, one's social context can determine not only the extent of pride or humility but *which* of these passions is experienced. For example, a modestly fine house situated in an impoverished town is likely to cause pride in the owner, but if that same house were placed in a highly affluent neighborhood, it would likely be a source of humility. The person who felt pride in her musical abilities in her small town comes to feel shame in those same abilities when she finds that they are surpassed by most of her classmates in the prestigious conservatory she now attends.

The social context, then, not only affects our experiences of pride and humility but can also impact the extent to which these passions are appropriately felt. On the one

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[37] Boswell writes that Hume "said he had never entertained belief in Religion since he began to read Locke and Clarke. I asked him if he was not religious when he was young. He said he was and used to read the *Whole Duty of Man*; that he made an abstract from the Catalogue of vices at the end of it, and examined himself by this, leaving out Murder and Theft and such vices as he had no chance of committing, having no inclination to commit them. This, he said, was strange work; for instance, to try if, notwithstanding his excelling his schoolfellows, he had no pride or vanity" (Boswell 1931, 227-228).

[38] In section *II.a.* of Chapter Three, I dealt with the apparent discrepancy that Hume's account of the passion of pride seems to be a matter of competition in Book II but his account of the virtue of pride in Book III seems to allow that proper pride is not limited to the elite but is a virtue available, in varying degrees, to ordinary people as well as great.

hand, a wide social exposure can be crucial for cultivating an accurate sense of our abilities and weaknesses. The musician mentioned above had an excessive pride in her skill when she lacked sufficient experience to make her aware of how far many others exceed her. But she nonetheless merits a chastened pride in her musical abilities, which are substantial even if she is not among the elite.

In this example, comparison could facilitate awareness of the "real and intrinsic merit" of her source of pride, insofar as it enables her to judge the extent to which she possesses musical excellence. But as Hume suggests by contrasting comparison and intrinsic value in the quote above, comparison can also obscure our awareness of the genuine worth of things. It seems particularly prone to do so when the sphere within which we compare ourselves is narrow and when we have a disproportionate attachment to certain qualities over other more valuable ones. Depending on the context, then, comparisons can cause one to lose sight of the genuine grounds for pride and humility and can therefore cause one to have an overblown or too low opinion of oneself. For example, if the musician judges her abilities only in relation to the highly select group of conservatory students, she may falsely view her genuine talent as worthless. This is especially so if she makes being an exceptional musician so central to her identity that she fails to appreciate her other valuable character traits or if her sense of shame in her "failure" infects her self-evaluations more broadly. (Conversely, if she *were* the best conservatory student, her inordinate valuation of being a great musician to the neglect of more significant virtues could cause her to have excessive pride in that fact—pride that has more extensive psychological reach than musical talent, even extraordinary talent, warrants.)

Thus, depending on the quality and range of our social experience, the comparisons we make with others can lead to quite different sorts of self-evaluations, whether those comparisons help us to correct or whether they distort our understanding of the relative worth of our attributes. I will be especially interested in the ways comparison can distort self-perception and be socially and personally destructive in section *II*. In preparation for this later discussion, I want further to point out that comparisons can combine with others' perceptions of ourselves in ways that can place an even wider gulf between the intrinsic values (that could serve as grounds for pride and humility) and our socially-informed self-perceptions than either might do alone.

I already discussed how others' approval or disapproval of ourselves can, by way of sympathy, transfer to pride and humility as we affectively register these evaluations. Now I want to look at how the principle of comparison might shape others' evaluations that we receive through sympathy. Let us consider the younger brother of an academically successful older sister. Even without the influence of others' perceptions, the boy would likely compare his intellect to his sister's, and he would perhaps struggle with intellectual confidence on the basis of that comparison, despite his average intelligence. But his struggle would be exacerbated if this sort of comparison were regularly (even if tacitly) made by the important adult figures in his life. Their emphasis on the difference between him and his sister would further encourage him to dwell on the comparison and to see it as significant. If his parents and teachers came, by virtue of this comparison, to have an unjustly low opinion of his mind, this would shape and give further weight to his own unduly low self-assessment.[39]

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[39] To reiterate, however, we cannot get away from comparison, nor should we. The way in which we can acknowledge that the brother does have good intellectual capacity (though less so than his sister) is not

This disproportionately negative self-appraisal is likely to have still further psychological influence if his parents and teachers regard intelligence as central to one's self-worth or if they are overly concerned with the way their children's/students' intelligence reflect upon themselves. If they value intelligence in these distorted ways then their judgments that the brother is not intellectually gifted can turn into stronger forms of disapproval, such as chastising the brother for not being smarter. Conversely, the older sister will likely have a disproportionately high estimation of her intellect and its overall significance for her worth the more intently the central social figures in her life approve of her mind in relation to others. Certainly the brother's being less academically capable than his sister need not diminish his self-worth, and it is less likely to do so if his social milieu does not overvalue intellect to the neglect of other goods and if his parents and teachers appropriately value the strengths that he does have. The point, however, is to show how deeply the social world can inform our self-evaluations, whether they facilitate proper self-knowledge (and hence a proper pride and humility/modesty) or a skewed sense of self (and hence an overblown pride or excessive humility).

Thus although we are dependent upon comparison and the perception of others for helping us to attain accurate self-knowledge and self-evaluation, it is also the case that these can work in such way as to effect us *more* than the intrinsic value of the causes. I will explore the destructive implications of these possibilities in *II*. First, however, I need to examine the motivational significance of pride so as to show the ease with which we might attempt to secure pride in ways that depart from pride's genuine grounds. It is to this topic I now turn.

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by mere assertion but by widening the sphere of comparison to children his age and, on the basis of this comparison, recognizing that he has normal aptitude. (More important, though, is to emphasize and encourage his strengths and to stress the importance of character over intellectual aptitude.)

c. Pride and Motivation

I have sketched Hume's basic account of the passions of pride and humility and have shown how these passions are shaped by the perceptions of others. In order to demonstrate, as I will in *II.*, that Hume's account of these passions can enrich our understanding of much of what undermines human flourishing, it is first necessary to explain more carefully how pride and humility (or the desire to experience the former passion and avoid the latter) can factor significantly into human motivation.

At first glance, it may seem that pride and humility do not play a central role in motivation for Hume since he does not explicitly discuss these passions in his account of action.[40] Moreover, it could seem that Hume gives them at best a minor role seeing as he maintains that only the 'direct passions'—i.e., passions that "arise immediately from good or evil, from pain or pleasure" (T 2.1.1.4, 182) such as desire, aversion, hope, fear, etc.—can motivate action. Because pride and humility are 'indirect passions'—i.e., passions that depend upon associative principles such as cause and effect, resemblance, and contiguity—they, according to Hume, have no direct bearing on action. What is thus needed to show that pride and humility can nevertheless significantly influence action is to explain how these indirect passions link up with the direct ones, particularly with desire and aversion.

This route initially seems to be blocked, however, by Hume's claim that "pride and humility are pure emotions in the soul, *unattended with any desire*, and not immediately exciting us to any action" (T 2.2.6.3, 237, emphasis mine).[41] Pure emotions are "compleated within themselves" and "rest in that emotion, which they produce"

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[40] See Part 3 of Book II in the *Treatise* for Hume's account of action.
[41] Hume elsewhere says, "pride and humility…are only pure sensations, without any direction or tendency to action" (T 2.2.9.2, 246).

rather than "carry[ing] the mind to something further" (T 2.2.6.3, 237). In this way pride is contrasted with love, for love is always accompanied by desire for the loved one's happiness (i.e., benevolence) (T 2.2.6.3, 237), whereas pride seems to be, on Hume's account, a self-sufficient emotion.[42] If pride and humility, unlike love, are not attended with desire, then in what way can they affect the direct passions so as to be, as I want to claim, motivationally relevant for Hume?

The answer to this question lies in appreciating the context in which Hume's discussion of pure and impure emotions arises. Hume draws the distinction between pure and impure passions when he discusses benevolence and anger, and he does so in order to show that the passion of love is always followed by benevolence (and hatred, by anger). Love, he says, "is always follow'd by "a desire of the happiness of the person belov'd, and an aversion to his misery" whereas hatred "produces a desire of the misery and an aversion to the happiness of the person hated" (T 2.2.6.3, 237). Pride and humility, by contrast, do not have any accompanying passions, being "unattended with any desire." This nevertheless does not exclude the possibility that they can *influence* our desires and aversions. Indeed, the very fact that Hume says that pride and humility, being pure emotions, do not "immediately excit[e] us to any action" (T 2.2.6.3, 237) indicates that he does think that they can influence action but that they do so mediately—i.e., by way of affecting some direct passion such as desire. The question remains then as to how pride and humility stand in relation to desire.

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[42] When Baier considers the sense in which Hume would regard pride as an emotion that rests in itself she helpfully observes that: 1) unlike hunger or thirst, which can be satisfied, "there is no natural consummation to pride, no state of repletion that ends the emotion" and, 2) since pride is "a peculiarly agreeable emotion,…one in its grip has no reason to switch, even to another agreeable passion" (1980b, 405).

Baier argues, I think rightly, that despite Hume's claim about pride's purity, pride is in fact attended by desire of a sort. She observes that the purity and self-sufficiency of pride depend upon pride's ability to generate a desire to maintain itself. She suggests that when Hume denies that pride is attended by desire, he is speaking of a restless desire that arises from discontent or lack rather than what she calls "conservative desire," i.e., desire to remain as we are (1980b, 406-7). Since when Hume discusses desire, he usually means the former variety, Baier suggests that he failed to specify that it is only restless desire to which he refers in this passage. She then argues that although the purity of pride is clearly not attendant with restless desire, pride would naturally be accompanied by the desire to retain the sources of its pride.[43] She suggests that Hume's example of how a person's desires are influenced by his pride in his fine clothes (T 2.3.9.4, 281) is an instance of pride generating the desire to maintain the grounds that support it (1980b, 406). But we can, of course, extend this to more significant sources of pride, such as the desire to maintain good moral character, as we saw in Hume's response to the sensible knave.

Furthermore, although pride, when it is experienced, may not be attended by a restless desire characteristic of lack as Baier has suggested, it may influence our action by standing as the *object* of desire when we do lack it or when we do not possess it to the degree that we would wish. Because self-approval is especially vital to our happiness whereas humility, when persistent and hard to overcome, is a particularly deep kind of pain, it would seem that pride is a chief object of desire and humility of aversion. We can think, for example, of the ways in which Socrates' interlocutors tended to avoid the

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[43] There is of course no corollary here with humility. Humility, though a pure emotion, does not generate a desire to retain itself. One might wonder, though, if Hume is wrong to call humility pure, for it would seem to be necessarily attended by desire for its remedy. If, for example, one were to claim that she felt humility/shame for a moral failing without desiring that she had no such failing, it would seem to call into question whether she genuinely felt humility.

questions that exposed their ignorance with respect to the beliefs upon which they

oriented their lives. This is both because of the human tendency to want to evade the

humility we tend to feel in being shown to be ignorant of important matters and also

because we are naturally reluctant to having the sources of our significance (i.e., of our

pride) called into question.[44] We can think also of Hume's claim that we have a natural

"love of fame" (T 2.1.11.9, 208; E IX.1, 276). This presupposes that we desire pride,

since loving the approval of others depends upon loving the self-approval that the

affirmation of others provides.

Finally, the purity of pride and humility do not prevent them from influencing our

action by way of coloring our mental and emotional lives. As mentioned in the previous

chapter, Hume says that a "due degree of pride…gives us a confidence and assurance in

all our projects enterprizes," and that for this reason it is more advantageous to overrate

than underrate our merits (T 3.3.2.8, 381). He reiterates this point when he says that the

pleasure attending pride "returns back to the direct affections, and gives new force to our

desire or volition, joy or hope" (T 2.3.9.4, 281). In these ways Hume suggests that

persistent experiences of pride and humility form a backdrop to the flow of passions, and

that our thinking and acting are significantly affected by the extent to which we feel the

emboldening passion of pride or the dejecting passion of humility. The confidence

provided by pride allows us, for example, to see challenges as opportunities in which to

grow, whereas the insecurity of humility is likely to regard challenges in a fearful, self-

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[44] While fear of shame/humility explains people's resistance to Socrates, shame can also play a positive role in Plato's attempt to heal his interlocutors' souls. Jill Gordon argues, for instance, that Plato uses shame to get his interlocutors to confess beliefs, engage in dialectic, and turn to the philosophical life, see *Turning Towards Philosophy: Device and Dramatic Structure in Plato's Dialogues* (1999, 24). See also Richard McKim's "Shame and Truth in Plato's *Gorgias*" (1988). The rehabilitating role of shame discussed in these reflections of Plato enriches the above account of the motivational importance of pride by filling out its corollary.

protective manner. Perhaps the most significant impact of (virtuous) pride on the psyche is, as discussed in Chapter Three, the way in which it can facilitate a wider, more extensive sympathy; humility, on the other hand, tends to provoke vicious comparisons with others as a way of propping up the self through finding fault elsewhere.

In sum, then, although Hume could have done more to explore the impact of pride and humility on human motivation and action, his account is open to, and indeed his examples presuppose, these three ways that pride can factor into human motivation: 1) by evoking desire to maintain itself, 2) by being the object of desire, and 3) by directing, coloring, and informing our mental and emotional lives. Indeed, I think that the desire for pride often has a powerful, if often unconscious, influence on human action—whether it lends motivational support for pursuing genuine goods in a manner that corresponds to their worth or whether it prompts us to seek pride in ways that do not wholly coincide with grounds that would justly secure it. In the next section I will explore this latter motivational potential of the desire for pride and, with it, some of the dangers to flourishing that our desire for pride poses.

II. Pride and Human Flourishing

Against the backdrop of Hume's account of the passions of pride and humility and their motivational significance, I will now look at the sort of problems that can arise for human flourishing because of our desire for a stable, well-formed pride. Specifically, I will explore the role that the passions of pride and humility play in three often interrelated phenomena—moral blindness, a stifled individual flourishing (e.g., in crippling shame), and a breakdown of social flourishing (e.g., factions and rivalries within communities and larger social bodies). In so doing I will be setting the stage for

the next and final chapter, where I will look at the resources that Hume's immanent moral

perspective and a Christian humanist's transcendent moral perspective have for coping

with these problems.

a. Pride and Moral Epistemology

The first problem for flourishing that I wish to consider is the way in which the

desire for the passion of pride can result in, perpetuate, and further ingrain bias,

disordered values, moral obtuseness. While in the last chapter I discussed the importance

of virtuous pride for moral epistemology insofar as it facilitates extensive sympathy, in

this section I want to explore how the natural desire for pride can, on the other hand, lead

to skewed moral judgments (and, in turn, provoke action which is harmful to the self or to

others). However much Hume is aware that our desire for pride in relation to others is

essential to the development of our moral attunement, he also indicates at points that the

desire for pride can lead to false or inadequate judgments of value. In this section it is the

latter—the potentially negative relationship that can exist with respect to pride and moral

epistemology—that will be examined.

As we have seen, Hume acknowledges that there can be a divergence between the

genuine goods in human life and our perceptions of those goods. He does so, for

example, when he speaks of how comparative judgments may loosen our appreciation of

the intrinsic value of things (e.g., T 2.1.6.2, 191; T 3.2.7.8, 345; T 3.3.2.4, 379), when he

accuses the religiously superstitious of elevating certain vices to the status of virtues (i.e.,

the 'monkish virtues'), when he discusses in "Of the Standard of Taste" how bias and

lack of proper cultivation result in poor aesthetic judgments, etc. For Hume it is the

general view or survey that enables us to determine the 'intrinsic value' of things, and

while there are critical questions to be raised with respect to the notion of intrinsic value for Hume, I will defer that discussion till Chapter Five. Here, however, I want to focus on Hume's recognition that there can be a disjunction between real goods and our judgments with respect to those goods, and I want to look at how the desire for pride can play a role in distorting our value judgments, particularly as they pertain to the moral life.

We have already seen in Chapter Three the importance of a well-founded pride for facilitating a wider, more extensive sympathy—the sort of sympathy that grounds the general view and thus is the basis for moral judgments on Hume's account. I looked in particular at Hume's discussion in Book II of how the principle of comparison can compete with the principle of sympathy, and then at his claim in Book III that it is the insecurity characteristic of those with ill-grounded conceit who are prone to compare themselves to others (rather than extend sympathy with them) in order to find in them some fault by which to inflate their own self-worth (T 3.3.2.7, 380).[45] Moreover, I explained how these vicious comparisons, due to the way in which they impede sympathetic awareness, cause one to misinterpret or to fail to register morally relevant information, thus skewing one's moral judgments in concrete situations. Here I want to show how the desire for pride, which tends to arouse these sorts of comparisons, can lead to three different types of mistaken value judgments.

The first and most obvious mistaken value judgment that I wish to consider is that of falsely thinking a virtue or vice is present that is not or of failing to see a virtue or vice that really is present. I will consider some examples and show how the desire for pride

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[45] We can distinguish these vicious sorts of comparisons from comparisons made out of an earnest desire to develop awareness of one's relative strengths and weaknesses or to appreciate how one can be enriched by the strengths of others. The latter sort of comparisons, as I pointed out in *I.b.*, are in fact necessary for self-knowledge and for cultivating virtuous pride and modesty, and they need not inhibit extensive sympathy.

and the vicious comparisons it evokes can undergird these mistakes in judgment.

Imagine, for instance, a person who envies her colleague's success. The achievements of

her colleague highlight her own inability to be similarly productive and hence arouse in

her the passion of humility. The humility sparked by the comparison is such that it

prevents her from feeling sympathetic joy in her colleague's accomplishments; rather, it

leaves her with a deflated sense of self. In an attempt to restore her wounded self-esteem,

she seeks out some vice in her colleague so as to feel superior to him after all. Her

disposition to prop herself up in this way may lead her to attribute vices to him that he

does not possess. For example, she may convince herself that he is successful because he

is a workaholic who neglects his family or that he does his work out of egocentric vanity.

Hume gestures toward this sort of phenomenon when he says, "[a]ny harm or uneasiness

has a natural tendency to excite our hatred, and that afterwards we seek for reasons upon

which we may justify and establish the passion" (T 2.2.4.9). If the "uneasiness" in

question is the humility caused by comparing oneself to one's superior, and if "hatred"

(or resentment) arises on the basis of envy, we may well attempt to demonize the person

who sets these disagreeable passions in motion, both to justify our hatred and to ease the

humility we feel.

In the same way, the desire for pride can lead us to fail to recognize vices or

virtues that really are present. Imagine again that the envious colleague, in her eagerness

to secure pride in relation to her successful colleague, seeks to identify his vices so as to

elevate herself by comparison. Suppose that she does recognize a genuine failing in her

colleague but does so in a way that causes her to fixate on the vice while other virtues go

unnoticed. In this case her mistake in judgment is to see the vice as being more deeply

rooted and extensive than it is and, accordingly, she fails to see his genuine virtues. Or

suppose that in her desire to think well of herself she avoids looking at her own vices.

Rather than turning the sympathetically informed general view on herself in earnest self-

evaluation, she operates at a biased level, ignoring or explaining away her vices while she

seeks them out in others.

> As Hume points out, judgments of character
>
> are always attended with passion; and nothing tends more to disturb our understanding, and precipitate us into any opinions, however unreasonable, than their connexion with passion; which diffuses itself over the imagination, and gives an additional force to every related idea. To which we may add, that being conscious of great partiality in our own favour, we are peculiarly pleas'd with any thing, that confirms the good opinion we have of ourselves, and are easily shock'd with whatever opposes it. (T 2.1.11.9, 209)

In other words, because judgments about our own character are especially attended with

passion, we are particularly susceptible to embracing those false opinions that would

seem to justify our feelings and paint us in a positive light. If attributing vices to another

or denying them in ourselves "confirms the good opinion we have in ourselves," then our

natural desire for pride makes us liable to this temptation.[46]

The second sort of mistake I wish to consider is that of how the desire for pride

can play a role in distorting our perception of an object's worth in relation to other

objects, such that a lesser good is elevated above a greater good and vice versa. We saw

in Chapter One that Augustine gave a great deal of attention to the question of how to

rightly order our loves, and he was right to see this as a morally and spiritually crucial

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[46] The desire for pride can, of course, also be at work in falsely attributing virtue to others. For example, if someone has been very important in forming the worldview that guides our lives and gives us a sense of significance, we are resistant to seeing this person in any negative light. Furthermore, in certain cases we struggle to admit the faults of those to whom our identities are tied (e.g., family and friends). Or, we can imagine situations in which a person falsely attributes virtue to an oppressor, so as not to feel as dejected in serving a "good" person as a malevolent one.

question. Hume does not explicitly address the issue of how to rank various goods, but as we saw in Chapter Three, he assumes a sort of answer in his response to the sensible knave. He refers, for example, to the sinking value of animal conveniences and pleasures compared to inward beauty and moral grace (EPM IX.I, 276). He also says,

> …what comparison between the unbought satisfaction of conversation, society, study, even health and the common beauties of nature, but above all the peaceful reflection on one's own conduct [i.e., when we have conducted ourselves virtuously]; what comparison, I say, between these and the feverish, empty amusements of luxury and expense? (EPM IX.II, 283-84)

Implicit in this statement are not just judgments as to goods for human life, but judgments as to which goods are most and least important: virtue supplants other goods in value, the goods of culture and the beauty of nature are also very significant, but less so, and an abundance of material possessions is "empty" by comparison to these greater goods. In the next chapter I will consider the extent to which Hume can ground this sort of value hierarchy, but for now let us assume that the scale of value that Hume sketched is philosophically justified and reflect instead upon how the desire for the passion of pride (as opposed to the virtue of pride) might lead to a disordering of these goods.

Consider, for example, the minor character Catherine in Alice McDermott's novel *After This*, who takes pride in the wealth that she acquired by marriage and as a result, all but ignores her lower-class family. In so doing she attributes more value to wealth than it merits and assigns significantly less value to family (and, indeed, to virtue, insofar as virtue would require her to treat her family with kindness and gratitude) than it deserves. Her desire to maintain a sense of pride in a social circle that would disapprove of the work and income of the lower-class is what lies behind the formation of her disordered emotional responses and judgments. Thus, her sympathy is limited to the social sphere

(i.e., the upper class) that would confirm her own good opinion of herself. Were she to extend her sympathy to her family, she would both become more fully aware of and concerned by the pain she caused them as well as become more aware of their perspective of her character (i.e., she would be better able to see her unkindness). But we can suppose that extensive sympathy with her family is impeded by a comparative element at work in her self-conception, for it is likely that her pride is caused not only by having gained wealth but also in *rising above* the situation to which she was born. In her case the two forms of improper evaluations that we have thus far discussed are combined: she fails to see vice that she possesses (value-mistake type one) and this is linked to her improper judgment of the relative value of wealth in relation to persons (value-mistake type two).[47]

A third type of error we can find in judgments of value is when genuine vices become interpreted as virtues and vice versa. Nietzsche was of course highly attuned to these phenomena, arguing that the weak, in their *ressentiment* towards the those that exhibit the genuine goods of power, strength, and nobility, convince themselves that their weakness and the attributes characteristic of weakness are good and that the characteristics of strength are evils. Although Hume does not take up this sort of distortion of values directly, his critique of the monkish virtues, his overt approval of certain things that have aroused suspicion in Christian morality such as fame, riches, and power, his discussion of Pascal's "artificial life," and indeed his very reversal of pride

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[47] Hume suggests this sort of disordering of values when he says, "A griping miser, for instance, praises extremely *industry* and *frugality* even in others, and sets them, in his estimation, above all the other virtues" (EPM VI, 234n26).

and humility all indicate that Christianity inverts our ordinary and correct way of evaluating certain goods.[48]

Hume does not give an account of how the desire for pride might have stood behind what he takes to be value distortions of this sort, but it is not difficult to see how the need for self-esteem can play such a role. For example, according to Nietzsche, the desire of the weak to attain the pride that they lack, given their downtrodden position, is essential to their generating the distorted catalogue of virtues and vices. The weak, he claims, come to affirm those things that characterize or protect weakness (meekness, compassion, etc.) and condemn the things that they fear or that keep them lowly (power, strength, wealth). That which they deem virtuous in turn serves to generate self-approval, since that which they take to be good is that which they are.

More broadly, though, the desire for pride can be at work in the various ways we might tend to interpret morally relevant phenomena. For example, we can think of the glutton who regards the temperate person as being stringent and unable to enjoy food freely or the anorexic who regards the temperate person's deep enjoyment of a fine meal to be a base over-indulgence. Or we can think of the irascible person who sees her irascibility and immediate expression of it to be a form of honesty and regards the virtuous person's emotional stability and self-controlled expression to reflect a flatness of personality and a dishonest suppression of feeling. It is indeed not uncommon to observe in human life that the desire for self-approval can lead us to make distorted value judgments in order to justify ourselves. While I think Hume is right to emphasize our general agreement that various characteristics are virtuous (e.g., temperance and honesty

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[48] Craig Beam 1996 excellently compares Nietzsche and Hume on their similar ways in which they saw Christianity as anti-natural and, correspondingly, as morally corrupting.

as suggested here), the desire for pride can easily prompt misinterpretations of moral phenomena such that what is in fact virtuous gets falsely labeled as vicious and vice versa.[49]

It is worth pointing out that, as with the other value misperceptions, value reversals often involve a comparative element that supplants sympathy. Nietzsche argues that the weak denounce the life-affirming values of the strong because they seek to vindicate themselves in relation to their superiors. A sympathy-displacing comparison is thus at work when, instead of acknowledging the gifts of the strong, the positive self-appraisal of the weak is necessarily bound up with condemning the characteristics of the strong as evil.[50] Similarly, when a person struggles with a vice and seeks self-justification through finding fault with the virtue, it is not the genuine desire for moral clarity but the biased desire for self-affirmation that motivates the judgment. The vicious person's quest for self-approval finds (spurious) support through invidious comparisons in which the virtuous are painted in a negative light. Moreover, the failure to sympathize with the virtuous person and to view oneself from the perspectives of those who have acquired the virtue in question perpetuates blindness about one's own vice.

I have discussed three ways in which the desire for the passion of pride can distort value judgments, and I have suggested how all three depend upon vicious comparisons made in order to bolster the ego rather than out of an earnest, sympathetically-informed

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[49] Aristotle makes a similar point about how those who have a particular vice are prone to see the relevant virtue (the mean) as an extreme (i.e., as vicious). He observes that "the coward, for instance, calls the brave person rash, and the rash person calls him a coward, and similarly in other cases" (NE II.8.25, 28). Aristotle does not explicitly link this tendency with the desire for self-approval, though I think that it often is connected to our desire to approve of our own character.

[50] Nietzsche thinks that sympathy (albeit understood differently than Hume's technical definition) itself is a value of the weak and promotes instead a comparative competition as a healthy expression of the will to power that is at work in us all. The sort of competition Nietzsche endorses, though, is not the sort prompted by envious comparison that is characteristic of the insecure, dejected self.

desire to arrive at sound moral judgments. I have been largely emphasizing how

individuals might make these mistaken value judgments, but it is also evident that these

value misperceptions can become culturally embedded as well. That the third type of

value error can become socially spread was already implicit in Nietzsche's analysis of

how the value-distortions of the weak become the accepted norms in the West, and

Hume's discussion of the monkish virtues points to how value misperceptions can be

socially inscribed among certain Christian groups. The disordered recognition of goods

(value error type-two) can of course also become socially prevalent. We can think, for

instance, of Augustine's critique that his father and teachers placed too much value on

academic success to the neglect of moral virtue (see C I.xviii.28, 20), or observe that the

wealthy Catherine's mistreatment of her family was re-enforced by a social milieu that

had a disordered attachment to wealth. Finally, the false attribution of vice or virtue

(value error type-one) can also be seen at a social level. Hume recognizes this point when

he says,

> When our own nation is at war with any other, we detest them under the character of cruel, perfidious, unjust and violent: But we always esteem ourselves and allies equitable, moderate, and merciful. If the general of our enemies be successful, 'tis with difficulty we allow him the figure and character of a man. He is a sorcerer: He has a communication with demons; as is reported of *Oliver Cromwell*, and the Duke of *Luxembourg*: He is bloody-minded, and takes a pleasure in death and destruction. But if the success be on our side, our commander has all the opposite good qualities, and is a pattern of virtue, as well as of courage and conduct. His treachery we call policy: His cruelty is an evil inseparable from war. In short, every one of his faults we either endeavour to extenuate, or dignify it with the name of that virtue, which approaches it. (T 2.2.3.2, 225)

Although in Hume's example, it is not necessarily the desire for pride that motivates attributing vice to our enemies and virtue to ourselves,[51] we can imagine instances in which a collective desire for national or communal self-approval could be at work in these sorts of moral misperceptions. For example, it is thought that Hitler's regime was able to take hold in part because Germany's humiliation after World War I made many of its citizens susceptible to his narrative valorizing the Arian race and attributing vice and ascribing blame to Jews and other minorities. Even when our community is flourishing internally, given the way in which our sense of significance and self-approval is bound up with the values that shape our communities and form our communal identities, we can easily become collectively defensive and quickly accusatory towards those who threaten those values. We see, for example, political parties and certain religious and anti-religious groups insult their straw-man conceptions of each other. These sweeping characterizations, which so often lack carefulness and understanding, serve, among other things, to make the members of the group feel a collective confidence and self-approval at being in the "right."

It is precisely when value misperceptions become socially shared that they can be especially pernicious. Our sympathetic constitution and natural concern with the perceptions of those others (especially with those like and near us) can be a great aid in helping us overcome our value misperceptions when we hold them alone. Our misperceptions inevitably rub up against disapproval and disagreement, which helps to expose the mistakes in our judgments and forces us to be able to give a satisfactory account of our views in light of the input from others. But when a mis-valuation is

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[51] Notice here that the first value mistake (attributing vice to others that is not there) combines with the third (that of reading the same moral phenomena as virtuous or vicious depending on whether it is in one's self-interest to do so).

socially shared, our sympathetic nature in fact tends to ingrain more deeply our mistaken

views rather than to help us break free of them. This is the case for a number of reasons.

First, moral blind spots are harder to detect when the community shares these value-

misperceptions. Second, as Hume points out, opinions as well as feelings transfer

sympathetically, and value judgments, being feeling-laden, are especially prone to

sympathetic transfer. Shared valuations, particularly those strong evaluations that run

especially deep in our identities, further contribute to a feeling of confidence as one's

own view is bolstered by others and as one's feelings are intensified by sympathetically

registering the corroborating feelings of others. Third, when the dearly held values of a

society are called into question, the dissenter opens herself to scorn and the sorts of

misattributions of vice of which we have been speaking. There can thus be an implicit

motivation to leave the dominant valuations unchallenged.

As I have already pointed out, Hume observes that the young tend to "implicitly

embrace every opinion propos'd to them" (T 2.1.11.2, 206), and this generational transfer

of valuations is one way in which distorted social values can become perpetuated.

Additionally, however, the desire to secure pride by way of securing the approval of

others can also be a powerful force in propagating misperceptions of value. We see this,

for example, in Flannery O'Connor's story "The Artificial Nigger" when Nelson, a young

country boy in the South, feels humility in front of his grandpa, Mr. Head, for regarding

the first black person he encountered as an equal person. His shame in his "ignorance" of

the man's "inferiority" plays a role in accepting the racism of his grandpa.[52] We see this

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[52] Here are key points from the relevant passage. After a black man passes Nelson and Mr. Head on the train, Mr. Head says to Nelson,
        "What was that?" he asked.

in also the young Augustine's confession that among his friends he "was ashamed not to be equally guilty of shameful behaviour when [he] heard them boasting of their sexual exploits" (C II.iii.7, 27). Thus, he says,

> I went deeper into vice to avoid being despised, and when there was no act by admitting to which I could rival my depraved companions, I used to pretend I had done things I had not done at all, so that my innocence should not lead my companions to scorn my lack of courage, and lest my chastity be taken as a mark of inferiority. (C II.iii.7, 27)

Indeed, our social world shapes our sense of those things that should excite pride and humility, even if those things are themselves value misperceptions.

Although Hume acknowledges our capacity for misperceptions of genuine goods in his account of the passions in Book II of the *Treatise* and elsewhere such as his remarks about the negative influence of religion on morality in the *Natural History* and the *Second Enquiry,* on the whole his moral philosophy appears quite optimistic about our capacity for moral insight. It seems, however, that dysfunction and disordered values are more commonplace and problematic than Hume seems to acknowledge. In light of Hume's own account of our deeply social nature, of the passions of pride and humility, and of these passions' role in provoking sympathy-displacing comparisons, we need to see how well his moral theory can deal with the problems that our need for pride and

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"A man," the boy said and gave him an indignant look as if he were tired of having his intelligence insulted.

"What kind of man?" Mr. Head persisted,…

"A fat man," Nelson said. …

"You don't know what kind?" Mr. Head said in a final tone.

"An old man," the boy said…

"That was a nigger," Mr. Head said and sat back. …

… "That's his first nigger," he said to the man across the aisle.

… "You never said they were tan. How do you expect me to know anything when you don't tell me right?"

"You're just ignorant is all," Mr. Head said…

Nelson turned backward again and looked where the Negro had disappeared. He felt that the Negro had deliberately walked down the aisle in order to make a fool of him and he hated him with a fierce raw fresh hate; and also, he understood now why his grandfather disliked them. (216)

social approval presents for moral epistemology. I will do so in the next chapter. Now, however, I will turn to the second way in which the desire for pride can be detrimental to flourishing.

b. Pride and Individual Flourishing

In this section I will look at some of ways that the desire for pride can undermine individual flourishing. Specifically, I will explore the sort of emotional problems that are constitutive of, or that stem, from the inability to procure well-founded pride. I have already mentioned above and in the previous chapter that pride, in the sense of a genuine and well-formed self-esteem, is one of the most indispensible goods of human life. Here I want to consider various ways in which this great good might not be attainable, as when a persistent humility shapes one's life for ill.[53]

There are two ways a person might suffer from a steadfast humility: 1) by lacking adequate grounds for pride in some respect, and 2) by being subject to social disrespect or derision. These two are often interrelated—e.g., the deformed or grumpy person often also receives social disapproval for those very reasons. I want to explore these two ways and their interrelationship more fully in what follows, considering how forms of moral blindness and vicious comparisons can contribute to an over-blown sense of worthlessness. I want to leave off for now discussing the person who struggles with central and deep forms of vice and for whom an intense shame may be well-grounded. My interest is in outlining forms of disproportionate humility and stressing the difficulty of overcoming humility when it is felt more deeply than is appropriate.

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[53] My concern in this section is not humility or shame as such, since these emotions play an important role in human life. For Hume the experience of humility and the desire to avoid it can motivate virtue and is important for moral formation (see Manzer 1996, 340-41).

I want first to explore the kind of humility of a person who lacks certain grounds for pride. For example, imagine a young person who has learning disabilities, lacks certain crucial social skills, and has no special talents. Suppose that others are not overtly unkind to this person; nevertheless, she still senses the social distance of her peers and the lack of attention and approval she receives from others. She attempts to achieve adequate grounds for self-approval by striving to succeed in various endeavors and fantasizing about a day when she will attain a sort of greatness that all will recognize, but her efforts miserably fail her. Her chief failings here are not moral ones, and she surely has grounds for self-approval,[54] but nevertheless, her failure to possess those socially obvious traits that secure approving recognition diverts her attention from the legitimate grounds for pride that she may well have and deprives her of the social support and love that human beings need to feel worthwhile.[55]

We can imagine another case wherein a person fails to feel adequate pride not because she lacks adequate grounds for pride in socially obvious ways but because others, due to disordered valuations, fail to recognize her worth. We can think, for instance, of a person who is quite talented and virtuous but, nevertheless, because of the impossibly high expectations of her parents, never feels her worth confirmed by her successes. In this case she has clearly identifiable grounds for pride, but she fails to receive the right sort of social approval (e.g., from her parents) that would make those grounds felt, perhaps despite the accolades she receives elsewhere. (One may well

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[54] See Jean Vanier (1998) for a powerful account of what he learned from living with those with severe disabilities, those who he came to see were very gifted at trust, emotional honesty, and vulnerability. It takes, however, a rare attentiveness and openness to others for these less obvious gifts to be appreciated.

[55] Arnold Isenberg in fact argues that "you can reasonably take pride in strength, beauty, or intelligence; but you cannot reasonably be ashamed of the corresponding defects" (1980, 356), and he does so by arguing that one must be responsible for that which can serve as a reasonable ground of shame. Hume's account of our dependency on the perception of others highlights the difficulty in avoiding shame with respect to those things that are not under our control if we receive regular disapproval for them.

wonder if the parents' refusal to approve of anything less than perfection stems from their own lack of proper pride, which prompts them to implicitly seek to derive significance from motivating their child to strive for perfection.) Or we can think of Arkady of Dostoyevsky's *The Adolescent*, who was brutally teased and mistreated by his peers and teachers at boarding school because he was an illegitimate child. The scorn he suffered in that environment, thus, issued from their disordered attachment to social class and propriety, rather than from insight into his character.

Finally, we can think of a situation where a person has adequate grounds for pride, but, precisely because of her gifts, she is subject to ridicule. Consider the intelligent child who is picked on by the popular child because the popular child feels insecure about his lesser intelligence. Here the bully compares himself to the intelligent child in a sympathy-displacing comparison. Perhaps he seeks to interpret her intelligence as a weakness (e.g., as being "boring and bookish")—a type of the third sort of value misperception mentioned in *II.a*. Or her intelligence is ignored altogether while some other weakness is fixated on, even though it was the superior intelligence that caused the bullying. Even with clear grounds for pride, we (particularly as children) are dependent on the right sort of social support to withstand the effects of unwarranted disapprobation.

Just as moral blindness can become culturally embedded, so too can excessive humility become socially prevalent. For example, when an underprivileged class is consistently looked down upon, members of that class can take on a posture of humility, and this can deeply affect a person's sense of self even if the root cause of the social difference stems from forces beyond one's control such as misfortune or even the worst sort of abuse from those in power (slavery, of course, comes to mind). Here, too, all the

problematic features of vicious comparison can come into play if the self-worth of the privileged person finds support by being supposedly better than the underprivileged. The Southern Mrs. Turpin in Flannery O'Connor's short story "A Revelation" happily engages in these sorts of comparisons to feel a self-approving "gratitude" for being who she is—and she defines who she is by who she is not, not "a nigger or white-trash or ugly" (642). She would sometimes

> occup[y] herself at night naming the classes of people. On the bottom of the heap were most colored people, not the kind she would have been if she had been one, but most of them; then next to them—not above, just away from—were the white-trash; then above them were the home-owners, and above them the home-and-land owners, to which she and Claud belonged. (636)

The story takes place prior to the civil rights movement, and thus her posture of comparative superiority is confirmed rather than challenged by her social relations; her individual pride is strengthened by the collective pride felt by members of her class. And for the same reasons that were discussed with respect to culturally inscribed distortions of value, socially shared and comparatively produced pride (or humility) of this sort is more difficult to uproot. In Mrs. Turpin's case, she needed a revelation violently delivered to her by a disturbed but perceptive college student to acquire insight into her vicious manner of deriving a sense of personal significance.

I mostly considered children in the examples above because it is easier to see the significance of social approval at a stage of human development where social dependency for our formation is at its most pronounced.[56] Nevertheless, it is clear that some of these experiences of humility, whether grounded in failure or the result of social disapproval or both, can follow a person into adulthood, even though we more or less acquire the ability

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[56] In Chapter Six I briefly suggest the proper sort of dependence and independence we should take towards our social world.

to sort out and deal with disapproval as we mature. Additionally, although adults become more skilled in masking insecurity and attempts to generate pride by way of domination, these phenomena are still abundantly present in all stages of life.

As we saw in the previous subsection, this sort of insecurity can have far-reaching significance for flourishing insofar as it commonly leads precisely to those vicious comparisons that block sympathy and distort our moral judgments. Moreover, as I will discuss in the next subsection, it can prompt the sorts of rivalries and factions that tear at the social body. Before moving onto issues surrounding pride and social disorder, however, I want to consider some vicious ways of coping with insufficient self-esteem in order to identify further ways that the need for pride can play a role in undermining individual flourishing.

One vice commonly found in the person who lacks virtuous pride is an over-attachment to approval, thereby taking excessive pleasure with oneself when affirmed by others. This over-attachment to approval can take two forms, what classical writers on the virtues called vainglory or ambition. According to Aquinas, vainglory is an inordinate desire for "glory" (i.e., renown or acclaim) (ST II-II: 132a1). On his account, a person can be said to be vain if she indiscriminately desires approving attention, wanting the praise of even those with poor judgment (ST II-II: 132.1) or if she seeks glory in a superficial good (ST II-II: 132a1). (These two forms of vanity hang together, since it is precisely superficial goods that will appeal to the masses rather than to those with the capacity for well-formed judgment.) We can think of Rosamond in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, who put great effort into learning the arts of grooming and social graces in order to be admired by all. Aquinas also points out that vainglory, in its over-reaching

concern for praise, can manifest itself in hypocrisy (i.e., in presenting a false self through word or deed) in order to impress others (ST II-II:132.5). We can think again of the young Augustine, who fabricates stories of his sexual exploits in order to impress his friends.

The vice of ambition (understood in the classical, pejorative sense of the term) is the inordinate desire for honor or respect (ST II-II: 131.1). While vainglory seeks acclaim as such, ambition seeks the honor that is merited by what is especially worthy of honor. The ambitious person thus seeks not widespread approval of just anyone for any reason; rather, she seeks respect for that which warrants respect. What is problematic about ambition, then, is the excessive attachment to honor, either by wanting more honor than one deserves or by wanting honor for its own sake instead of for the benefit of others (ST II-II: 131.1).

Osmond in Henry James's *A Portrait of a Lady* is an excellent example of a character consumed by ambition. Since Osmond is a gentleman with no noteworthy standing or wealth, he seeks to establish himself and to garner respect through cultivating a refined sensibility. This not only affords him a means to look down on others for their lack of refinement, but it provides the grounds by which he hopes that others will recognize this superiority. Osmond seeks to communicate his superiority to others by holding regular exclusive parties (wherein he gets to exercise his cultivated sensibility by choosing who the initiates will be), by acquiring a fine collection of artwork so that his excellent taste will be visible, and by procuring the hand of a beautiful, intelligent, wealthy, and virtuous Isabel. (Since Isabel has rejected a man with reputable character and enormous wealth, her acceptance of Osmond confirms to him and to others that he

must be extraordinary to be chosen by her.) Instead of desiring honor for the sake of the common good (e.g., a recognition that would enable him to offer his gifts for the service others) or instead of seeking to be truly known and loved in genuine friendship, he relishes honor as a means to his own self-aggrandizement.

Despite their different emphases, both vainglory and ambition involve servility to the perceptions of others rooted in their undue reliance on others to support one's own sense of self-worth.[57] Both also involve egocentric self-preoccupation, for in both vices others become a means for one's project of self-affirmation.[58] And along with the awareness of where one stands in the perceptions of others, these vices tend also to promote those vicious comparisons of which Hume has pointed out the insecure person is especially vulnerable, since to gain approval in the eyes of others is best secured by being better than others.[59] The tendency toward hyper-comparison, as Hume points out, in turn spawns four emotions that further undermine individual flourishing—envy, malice, hatred, and contempt—all of which have the tendency to dominate the emotional life once they take hold. Since these passions can poison our communal life and motivate actions that disrupt the social body, I will consider these emotions in the next subsection,

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[57] While Rosamond seems in command of her social world, she is in fact its slave. She studiously observes what will evoke approval and modifies her behavior to ensure she will receive it. She has little sense of her own inner promptings since she has habituated herself to behave according to others' expectations. Osmond recognizes his merits but has brooding frustration when others fail to see them. Although he feigns indifference to the perceptions of others, Isabel later came to perceive that "indifference was really the last of his qualities; she had never seen any one who thought so much of others. …He was unable to live without [society], and she saw he had never really done so; he had looked at it out of his window even when he appeared to be most detached from it" (479).

[58] Isabel comes to see that "[u]nder his culture, his cleverness, his amenity, under his good-nature, his facility, his knowledge of life, his egotism lay hidden like a serpent in a bank of flowers" (479).

[59] We see this especially in Osmond. Of him Isabel came to recognize that "he pointed out to her so much of the baseness and shabbiness of life, opened her eyes wide to the stupidity, the ignorance of mankind, that she had been properly impressed with the infinite vulgarity of things and of the virtues of keeping one's self unspotted by it. But this base, ignoble world, it appeared, was after all what one was to live for; one was to keep it for ever in one's eye, in order not to enlighten or convert or redeem it, but to extract from it some recognition of one's own superiority. On the one hand it was despicable, but on the other it afforded a standard" (479).

where I look at the desire for pride and its potentially destructive effects on social flourishing.

c. Pride and Social Flourishing

I now will consider how the desire for pride can undermine social flourishing by fueling rivalries and spawning social factions. Many of the problems for flourishing that I have explored thus far stem from or are constitutive of those vicious sorts of comparisons that compete with extensive sympathy. Here I want to look at how these kinds of comparisons excite negative passions—namely, envy, malice, hatred, and contempt—that can be directly harmful to the social body. While these passions can prevent individual flourishing insofar as they afflict and embitter the soul, I discuss them in this subsection since these same passions infect our relationships with others, enflaming hatred and leading to separation rather than to friendship and benevolence among persons. I will present and develop Hume's account of these passions, showing how the desire for pride is fundamental to their most vicious manifestations.

Envy, on Hume's account, is essentially dependent upon the principle of comparison for its origin. Hume, ever perceptive about the prevalence of comparisons in human life, observes that

> we must receive a greater or less satisfaction or uneasiness from reflecting on our own condition and circumstances, in proportion as they appear more or less fortunate or unhappy, in proportion to the degrees of riches, and power, and merit, and reputation, which we think ourselves possest of. Now as we seldom judge of objects from their intrinsic value, but form our notions of them from a comparison with other objects; it follows, that according as we observe a greater or less share of happiness or misery in others, we must make an estimate of our own, and feel a consequent pain or pleasure. The misery of another gives us a more lively idea of our happiness, and his happiness of our misery. The former, therefore, produces delight; and the latter uneasiness. (T 2.2.8.8, 242)

This passage pertains to pleasure and pain in general and need not involve the pleasure and pain constitutive of pride and humility. For example, a friend's trip to Italy could make one's suburban town seem all the more dreary, without elevating or deflating her sense of worth. But many comparisons of this sort do touch upon our sense of self-worth. Another's talent can heighten one's humility in his lesser ability, or another's virtue can make one feel doubly shamed by her vice. It is particularly the latter type of comparison—that which alters our self-assessments—that I want to focus on here.

Whenever another's happiness is perceived as more than our own and by comparison diminishes our own happiness, envy can arise (see T 2.2.8.12, 243). Given the way in which any pleasure or pain related to ourselves can transfer to pride and humility, it is often the case for comparisons grounding the envy to involve a sense of pain in *oneself* for one's inferior attribute, position, or possession and a desire to possess the superiority that the other is perceived to have. Hume suggests this when he says, "The enjoyment, which is the object of envy, is commonly superior to our own. A *superiority naturally seems to overshade us*, and presents a disagreeable comparison" (T 2.2.8.12, 243, emphasis mine), and also when he says that "even in the case of an inferiority [on the part of another person], we still desire a greater distance, *in order to augment still more our idea of ourself*" (T 2.2.8.12, 243, emphasis mine). Often, due to the way that our self-assessments are influenced by the perceptions of others, envy involves wanting the esteem that goes along with possessing that which is envied. This is why Hume points out that one can even envy an inferior if she is approaching and threatening to overtake him in his quest for glory (T 2.2.8.12, 243).

Envy—especially the sort of envy that is bound up with one's self-worth—is not only destructive to the flourishing of the individual consumed by it, but it can undermine social flourishing by provoking enmity between individuals as they compete for social recognition and strive to prove that they are better than others.[60] Since our social nature makes us aware of and concerned with social perception of ourselves, envy of two who have generally equal status can be bi-directional, as both seek to establish significance by besting the other and deriving satisfaction from getting the other to acknowledge one's superiority.[61]

It is not uncommon that envy can lead to rivalries in this way, however subtle, especially once we appreciate Hume's point that envy is more likely to arise when there is greater proximity and relation between the envier and the one-envied (T 2.2.8.13-14, 243-44). He notes,

> A common soldier bears no such envy to his general as to his sergeant or corporal; nor does an eminent writer meet with so great jealousy in common hackney scribblers, as in authors, that more nearly approach him. It may, indeed, be thought, that the greater the disproportion is, the greater must be the uneasiness of the comparison. But…the great disproportion cuts off the relation, and either keeps us from comparing ourselves with what is remote from us, or diminishes the effects of the comparison. (T 2.2.8.13, 243)

Hume also observes that envy depends upon relations of certain similarities to arise. A poet is not likely to envy a philosopher, Hume says, nor a poet from a different nation,

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[60] I by no means want to suggest that all competition is bad. Indeed, it can play a motivationally important role in the pursuit of excellence, as Nietzsche points out. I do think, however, that competitiveness can go wrong when the primary focus shifts from striving for excellence as such to striving to be better than others. The person who seeks excellence would be able to thank the competitor who outranks her for helping her be better than she would otherwise be, whereas the person who primarily seeks to be the best feels dejected and resentful towards her superiors and tends to view the excellence she has achieved has little worth unless if it is surpassed by others.

[61] René Girard has explored the phenomena of envy, rivalry, and violence in human life with exceptional insight through his explication of what he calls 'mimetic desire'—i.e., the human capacity to imitate and take on the desires of others. Although I do not go as far as he in seeing these dynamics as at the heart of human culture (I think that Girard's negative view of human nature can be understood as a version of hyper-Augustinianism in this regard), he convincingly shows, I think, that they do go very deep in human life. See especially his *Violence and the Sacred*.

time period, or genre (T 2.2.8.15, 244). Thus, envy and envy-informed rivalries are liable to erupt in the very communities in which we find ourselves—among colleagues, among siblings, and so on.

One need not feel envy, however, for this viciously comparative dynamic to be at work in our social relations. We may well occupy a superior position, and therefore, rather then envy others, we may take pleasure in contemplating our superiority over them. We saw this with Mrs. Turpin, mentioned above, who enjoys recounting her superior social status to those in classes below her. This sense of superiority can lead us to mistreat those whom we deem to be inferior, as our sense of superiority tends to block sympathy and either makes us unaware of our mistreatment or to see it as justified (as can be seen, for example, in Mrs. Turpin's politely condescending attitude toward her black servants). We can think also of the way in which, in the current political climate in the United States, some people take great pride in being Democrat or Republican, seeing themselves (not just their position) to be superior to their opponents whom they demonize.

Robert C. Roberts points out that a competitively derived sense of worth can be pervasive even in the apparently closest relationships. He notes that because it is more gratifying to be approved of by those equal enough to be competitors rather than those who are obviously inferior (1982, 64-66), a person whose self-worth is built upon comparison is likely to form friendships with relative equals who are able to come to some "understanding," which serves to build one's pride (1982, 66). This might consist in being the understood superior, where one plays the role of the wise advice-giver. Or it might consist in being the understood inferior who, instead of envying the friend, enjoys

how his association with his friend heightens his superiority to other persons or groups

(1982, 66). In contrast to relationships built on genuine love, relationships built on

comparison are vulnerable to subtle shifts in social status that can rupture the friendship

and can lead to the passions of envy or contempt that were previously mitigated by the

association. The person whose advice becomes regularly challenged begins to feel

insecure and dejected. The person who, through growing success or luck, ascends in the

social world to a position higher than the friend he previously saw as superior and enjoys

how the tables have turned, and perhaps now sees the friendship as a dispensable one.

Such relationships are inherently unstable and infected with a tendency to always look up

or down at others, always measuring and comparing, never resting secure in relationships

built on love rather than competition.[62] If Hume is right that comparing ourselves to

others is very commonplace, something that "we are every moment apt to do…" (T

2.1.6.5, 191), then this unhealthy way of navigating our social life is a persistent

temptation.

There are of course progressively brutal ways in which the desire for pride

secured in relation to others can manifest itself. This is especially the case when a person

seeks pride through exercising power and through forcing others to acknowledge that

power.[63] Consider, for instance, Vicomte de Valmont in Laclos' novel *Les Liaisons*

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[62] We see this tendency in Osmond who harbored "a sovereign contempt for every one but some three or four very exalted people whom he envied…" (479).

[63] According to Árdal, Hume sees the passion of pride as "an invigorating emotion that tends…to prevent bullying" (1989b, 393). Hume, however, regularly lists power among the causes of pride, and certainly the self-elation that accompanies exercising power over another seems to be a feeling of pride (i.e., pride caused by power) as Hume describes it. Baier in fact argues that, for Hume, "pride in generalized forms of power, such as power over others, or in riches, is pride in its paradigm form" (1980a, 140). On Baier's interpretation, although not all pride-producing power is of the dominating sort, neither is domination excluded from nor, as Árdal thinks, prevented by Humean pride as a passion. Manzer points out that even Hume's discussion of noble pride "involves a strong elements of naked, willful self-assertion, and for this reason it can be classed [in EPM VII] with Alexander's feeling of 'dignity and right of empire' and

Dangereuses. Vicmote wants to seduce Madame de Tourvel precisely because she is

virtuous. To lure her into an adulterous relationship with him—a choice that is morally

reprehensible to her—would therefore be the ultimate affirmation of his sexual power. It

is not that Vicmote is interested in Madame de Tourvel's moral downfall as such, but he

seeks it insofar as it essentially adds to his self-aggrandizing triumph.[64]

There is, however, a passion that Hume discusses in which the desire for a

comparatively-secured pride can lead to the *direct* desire for another's suffering. This is

the passion of malice, which Hume describes as "the unprovok'd desire of producing evil

to another, in order to reap a pleasure from the comparison" (T 2.2.8.12, 243). Malice can

arise out of envy, when the pain of the envied person is coveted as a way of easing the

pain of inferiority. But it can also be felt by the one in a superior position, whose delight

in her superiority increases by the comparative elevation she feels in relation to another's

pain. As malice intensifies, it moves from mere desire for evil to befall others to outright

attempts to facilitate it. Indeed, pride-related malice can lead to utterly diabolical

behavior. Dostoyevsky is a master at exploring this phenomenon. In *The Brothers*

Karamazov, for instance, Ivan recounts to Alyosha a series of reports in which people

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Vitellius's defiant sense of his own superiority" (1996, 339). While Manzer argues that ultimately Hume refines his account of noble pride to center upon a central attachment to one's character, he acknowledges that Hume does initially have a "surprising openness to more dangerous forms of pride" (1996, 339). It thus seems to me that, though bullying and brute domination are clearly excluded from Hume's sense of virtuous or noble pride (the bully is indeed pathetic and base), I fail to see why Árdal thinks that the mere passion of pride tends to inhibit bullying. It seems, rather, that the desire for this passion is precisely at the root of domination for those who struggle to or are insufficiently concerned with securing pride in nobler ways.

[64] In a letter to his accomplice, the Marquise de Merteuil, he writes:

I shall have this woman; I shall carry her away from the husband who profanes her; I shall even dare to ravish her from the God she adores. What a delicious pleasure to be alternately the cause and the conqueror of her remorse! Far be it from me to wish to destroy the prejudices which torment her! They will add to my happiness and my fame. Let her believe in virtue, but let her sacrifice it to me; let her slips terrify her without restraining her; let her be agitated by a thousand terrors and be unable to forget and to crush them save in my arms. Then I agree, she may say: 'I adore you'—and she alone among all women will be worthy to say so. I shall indeed be the God she has preferred. (Letter 6)

enjoy abusing others (and do so in order to feel the self-elation and elevation that comes

from having power over them). He tells, for example, of Turks who

> among other things, have also taken a delight in torturing children, starting
> with cutting them out of their mothers' wombs with a dagger, and ending with
> tossing nursing infants up in the air and catching them on their bayonets before
> their mothers' eyes. The main delight comes from doing it before their mothers'
> eyes. (238)

It is the pleading, desperate gazes of the mothers and the tortured acknowledgement of

the Turks' complete control over them that is essential to the Turks' enjoyment of their

own power and feeling of superiority.

The desire for pride in relation to others can also provoke the related but distinct

passion of hatred. While Hume understands humility to be a painful impression of the

self that is based upon one's relation to a painful cause, hatred is a painful impression

with regard to another for his or her relation to a painful cause (T 2.2.1.1, 214). But just

as humility can be ill-founded, so too can hatred, and in fact ill-founded hatred is

especially prone to arise at the pride-wounding disapprovals of others. Hume observes

this when he says, "nothing more readily produces kindness and affection to any person,

than his approbation of our conduct and character: As on the other hand, nothing inspires

us with a stronger hatred, than his blame or contempt" (T 2.2.2.27, 224).[65] The

implication is that regardless of whether another's disapproval of us is warranted, the

displeasure we feel in having our character criticized tends to produce hatred toward the

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[65] See also where Hume says,
> Nothing is more evident, than that any person acquires our kindness, or is expos'd to our ill-will, in
> proportion to the pleasure or uneasiness we receive from him, and that the passions keep pace
> exactly with the sensations in all their changes and variations. Whoever can find the means either by
> his services, his beauty, or his flattery, to render himself useful or agreeable to us, is sure of our
> affections: As on the other hand, whoever harms or displeases us never fails to excite our anger or
> hatred. (T 2.2.3.2, 225)

What is of particular interest here is when the pleasure or uneasiness received is that constituting the
pleasure of pride and the pain of humility.

person who calls our worth in question in some respect. This hatred need not be limited to direct disapprobation from another, however. Those who challenge the values by which we derive our sense of significance and worth can become an object of hatred. We can think, for example, of how Socrates was hated for exposing the ignorance underlying the very things in which people took pride (e.g., Euthyphro's piety, Meletus's patriotism, the value of Gorgias's oratory skill, and so on).[66]

As we saw in *I.c.*, Hume strongly links hatred and anger. He argues that "hatred produces a desire of the misery and an aversion to the happiness of the person hated" (T 2.2.6.3, 237), and that anger is "conjoin'd with [hatred], by the original constitution of the mind" (T 2.2.6.6, 237). In contrast to malice, which is unprovoked and necessarily rooted in a desire for a pleasure that, by comparison, increases in proportion to another's pain, hatred arises on the basis of a cause and seeks the misery of another but presumably does so in order to obtain satisfaction for the anger, not necessarily to glean pleasure from the comparison. When hatred and anger are unjustly founded, the actions that anger instigates can be harmful indeed, as we see in the trial of Socrates portrayed in the *Apology*. Moreover, when hatred arises towards someone who has injured one's pride, anger and malice ("which imitates the effects of hatred" (T2.2.8.1, 240)) can emerge together, jointly motivating the desire to inflict pain on the person who caused offense. We might speculate that Meletus was pleased by Socrates's sentence to death, not only because he thought Socrates to be corrupting the youth (and seemed to harbor a hatred-inspired anger toward Socrates for that reason) but also because it may have felt gratifying to see the

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[66] It is worth pointing out, too, that loving those who love us can also be socially destructive, as for example when the flatterer receives special attention and favors at the expense of others.

downfall of the person who shamed him by exposing his ignorance of what makes a good citizen before the members of the Athenian courts.

Yet another potentially destructive pride-related passion that can arise for us in relation to others is contempt. Contempt, on Hume's account, is a mixture of pride and hatred, which "arises from a tacit comparison of the person contemn'd…with ourselves" (T 2.2.10.3, 251). Of this mixture "contempt or scorn has so strong a tincture of pride, that there scarce is any other passion discernible" (T 2.2.10.4, 251). In the next chapter I will briefly pursue the question of whether and in what sense contempt (or hatred) can be appropriate, but here I want to point out that, if contempt is ever justified, it is clearly often a dangerous emotion. There is hardly another passion aside from malice that has such a potential for limiting sympathy and blinding us to the humanity of the condemned one. We see the danger of contempt, for example, in Ivan Karamazov, who, out of nobly high aspirations and a great capacity and will to pursue them, feels contempt for the unremarkable masses. He thinks it is "possible to love one's neighbor abstractly, and even occasionally at a distance, but hardly ever up close" (237) because he recoils at the weaknesses and vices of others. In addition to his own suffering that follows from his isolation and inability to love, his contempt makes him impotent for getting involved in the world in a way that can help heal others and encourage them toward the very ideals to which he aspires. And his particular contempt for his father plays a direct role in his willful detachment from his family's crisis, which in turn facilitates his father's murder.

As we have observed with other phenomena related to pride and humility, these negative passions can become collective through the workings of natural sympathy, and hence the rivalries and conflicts that envy, relishing one's superiority, malice, hatred, and

contempt can produce between individuals can create factions between larger social

bodies and have further detrimental effects on social flourishing.[67] Hatred has a particular

tendency to spread not just through natural sympathy with those like us but also through

group association. On this point Hume says that when we

> love or hate any person, the passions seldom continue within their first bounds;
> but extend themselves towards all the contiguous objects, and comprehend the
> friends and relations of him we love or hate. … A quarrel with one person gives
> us a hatred for the whole family, tho' entirely innocent of that which displeases
> us. Instances of this kind are every where to be met with. (T 2.2.2.18, 221)

Those in the hated group are apt to return the sentiment with equally far-reaching spread,

bringing anger, malice, and contempt in its train.

As was discussed above, when ill-founded passions become transferred in a

group, it is particularly difficult to perceive and uproot the evaluative error. The passions

discussed here are especially liable to this problem for three reasons. First, these passions

are what Hume calls "violent," tending especially to overwhelm our critical capacities.

Second, these passions (except for hatred) by their very nature contain a comparative

element that runs counter to extensive sympathy. When these passions are shared in a

group, it is less likely that a member will have sufficient sympathy with those outside to

call into question the justice or intensity of these feelings. (Although hatred is not

comparative, its corresponding desire for the hated one's misery tends to block extensive

sympathy as well.) Third, the very violence of these passions, particularly when bound up

with the desire for pride, makes them especially prone to sympathetic contagion, causing

them to be felt more intensely and confidently as they reverberate through the social

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[67] Since in Hume's technical definition malice is *unprovoked* desire of producing evil to another in order to feel pleasure by comparison, it is less likely that malice would become collective. But we can still imagine cases where it does—for example, when a gang of adolescents vandalize the courthouse in order to feel empowered by desecrating a publically important space.

body. In more extreme cases, the heightened passions of (ill-grounded) hatred and contempt, for example, can contribute to a false sense that violence is justified or that seeking to understand the "enemy" is to commiserate with them.[68] The potential for heated social divisions to occur when collective pride or shame is at stake, it seems, is particularly great, since our sense of significance or self-worth can matter more to us than conflicts over material goods.

I do not mean to suggest that all conflict owes itself to the dynamics of pride and humility. The tendency to protect self-interest more broadly plays an obvious role in social factions, as do earnest disagreements about how best to live together. But because, as Hume points out, "the idea of ourselves is always intimately present to us" (T 2.2.4.7, 229) and the pleasure of pride and the pain of humility matters so crucially for us, we so often see the desire for pride operative (frequently working alongside other factors) in the sorts of conflicts and factions that are unnecessary and harmful to flourishing.

III. Conclusion

I have presented Hume's account of the passions of pride and humility in the context of social life and have shown how pervasive they can be in human psychology and human motivation. I have also shown how Hume's account of these passions sheds light on various phenomena that stand opposed to human flourishing, such as moral blindness, unwarranted shame and the vices that arise because of it, and unnecessary

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[68] Again, it remains to be explored in the next chapter whether well-grounded hatred or contempt (and perhaps violence that ensues) is justified, and we will have to consider the epistemological basis for knowing that these emotions are adequately grounded, especially given their tendency to limit sympathy and overtake critical reflection.

conflict and factions.[69] Despite, then, the importance of virtuous pride to the moral life

for Hume, we have also seen (and as Hume to a large extent acknowledges) that the way

in which the passion of pride factors into human psychology can create problems that can

have far-reaching negative effects.

The next two chapters will explore what Hume's account of virtuous (and

immanently derived) pride and Aquinas's Christian humanist Aquinas account of

virtuous (essentially transcendently oriented) humility can offer to mitigate these

problems. In and through this discussion, I will examine the strengths and weaknesses of

secular versus religious (specifically, Christian humanist) accounts of morality with

respect to human flourishing.

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[69] Pride's relation to the issue of factions is a particularly interesting problem for Hume given that, as Herdt has convincingly argued and as I have stressed in Chapter Two, his interest in providing a secular, non-sectarian account of ethics was motivated in part by a desire to mitigate religious faction.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE LIMITATIONS OF HUME'S ACCOUNT OF PRIDE AS A VIRTUE

"By our continual and earnest pursuit of a character, a name, a reputation in the world, we bring our own deportment and conduct frequently in review, and consider how they appear in the eyes of those who approach and regard us. This constant habit of surveying ourselves…in reflection, keeps alive all the sentiments of right and wrong, and begets, in noble natures, a certain reverence for themselves as well as others, which is the surest guardian of every virtue." (EPM 276)

"But in all ingenuous natures, the antipathy to treachery and roguery is too strong to be counter-balanced by any views of profit or pecuniary advantage. Inward peace of mind, consciousness of integrity, a satisfactory review of our own conduct; these are circumstances, very requisite to happiness, and will be cherished and cultivated by every honest man, who feels the importance of them." (EPM 283)

"Korsgaard tells us that if we violate our self-authored maxims we are no longer able to think of ourselves under the description under which we value ourselves, find our lives to be worth living and our actions to be worth undertaking. … It gets things the wrong way round. The reason why we cannot live with ourselves, or consider life worth living, if we contradict our moral sentiments is because we take them to be the claims of something absolute upon us" (Angus Ritchie, 155)

My aim in this and the following chapter is to explore the degree to which Hume has resources for coping with those problems for individual and social flourishing that have their roots in our natural desire for the passion of pride. I, thus, look at the limited extent to which a prideful concern for character (i.e., Hume's conception of virtuous pride) can motivate extensive sympathy over vicious comparison so as to curtail the moral blindness and unjustified emotions that contribute to faction. I also identify the limitations in Hume's ability to promote the conditions for building a stable, secure self-esteem in a social world wherein vicious comparison is widespread. These limitations and their practical import will emerge more clearly, however, in the next chapter, where I compare Hume's secular perspective and the picture of virtuous pride that it supports

with Christian humanist humility and the Christian moral framework within which it is understood to be a central virtue.

To appreciate the place of this and the following chapter in the overall argument of this dissertation, it will be helpful to summarize where we have come. I began by pointing to two of Hume's central criticisms of religious (and particularly Christian) morality. First, Hume thinks it undermines individual flourishing by distorting the ordinary operation of the passions, which causes religious believers to shun the genuine sources of this-worldly joy as they pursue a false, otherworldly happiness. For Hume, the self-deprecating conception of humility prevalent in the Scottish religious culture of his time was a prime example of how religious outlooks could subvert the passions. Scottish Calvinism both elevated the highly disagreeable trait of humility and condemned as damnable the natural and highly agreeable self-affirmation of pride. Moreover, on Hume's view, since Christian morality puts forward impossibly high moral standards that are ill-suited to human nature (see ESY 83 and EPM IX.1, 270), it diminishes the sources of self-affirmation insofar as our efforts at goodness always fall painfully short of what true virtue demands.

Second, Hume thinks that religious morality undermines social flourishing by exciting particularly pernicious social factions. This worry, too, is captured in Hume's critique of Christian humility. Again drawing from the conceptions of humility bequeathed to him by his religious upbringing, Hume understands Christian humility to involve abject submission to the supposed decrees of God—a submission so complete that it requires even the silencing of one's intellect. This sort of submission to a deity inevitably creates factions. It does so, first, because different groups hold submissive

reverence for conflicting conceptions of God and of God's demands. Second, because focusing on these differences directs attention away from those shared goods of human life (which are more evident than religious claims), it undercuts sympathy and sympathetic dialogue. Moreover, these two criticisms of Christian morality (and of humility in particular) are linked. The religiously-induced malformation of our passions undermines the basis for sympathy and shared discourse, leading to unnecessary faction.

Over and against the religious (and especially Christian) morality he critiques, Hume thinks that his secular ethic of ordinary life and his rehabilitation of pride can better promote individual and social flourishing. His account of morality is at home in the ordinary operation of the passions and focuses on those common goods of human life and do not depend upon those, as he sees it, grand but unempirical religious claims that make social factions so embittered and intractable. As part of this project, he recovers pride as a virtue, showing its significance not only for a flourishing human life but also for motivating morality and enabling a wider, more extensive sympathy. However, despite the importance of Hume's concerns about the detrimental effects of religious morality, in this chapter I want to show that Hume's moral philosophy carries with it its own threats to individual and social flourishing precisely because it rejects any appeal to a transcendent moral source.

These threats become apparent in light of the problems that, as identified in the previous chapter, arise due to the pervasiveness of our desire for the passion of pride and our dependence on the perceptions of others for sustaining it. To review, we saw that the desire for pride can lead to: 1) moral blindness (insofar as it promotes vicious comparison rather than extensive sympathy and disposes us falsely to see virtue in ourselves and vice

in others), 2) a dejected self (insofar as persons fail to receive the requisite affirmation needed for acquiring a stable self-esteem; and lacking the security of a stable self-esteem before others often leads to vicious attempts to secure pride through vainglory and ambition), and 3) unjustified faction-inducing passions (such as envy, malice, hatred, anger, and contempt). Indeed, as I showed in the last chapter, these phenomena are pertinent to the very problems that Hume was keen to mitigate by developing a secular ethic—namely, the problems of individual unhappiness and social conflict.

By more closely examining Hume's account of virtuous pride in this chapter and by comparing it with the Christian humanist humility of Aquinas in the next, I want to bring out some of the weaknesses of Hume's secular perspective with respect to its ability to promote and sustain human flourishing. In so doing, I intend also to show that despite Hume's criticisms of Christian humility as part of his secularization of ethics, it can go further in diminishing the problems caused by our natural desire for the passion of pride than can Humean virtuous pride.

I. Prideful Concern for Character and the Problem of Faction

In this section I examine the extent to which Hume's immanent moral philosophy can mitigate the problem of unnecessary factions that arise due to our desire to secure the passion of pride.[1] I thus focus on the problems of moral blindness and of faction-inducing

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[1] Clearly some conflicts are necessary and may well arise among virtuous and sympathetic parties who nevertheless have incompatible convictions regarding the good. My interest here is in those unnecessary social divisions that are prompted and perpetuated by a vicious attempt to secure pride and by lack of sufficient sympathy.

passions, since, as I showed in *II.a.* and *II.c.* of Chapter Four, both directly contribute to social division.[2]

As we saw in the previous chapter, moral blindness and unjustified faction-inducing passions both stem from the sorts of vicious comparisons that prohibit the development of a wider, more extensive sympathy.[3] We have also seen, however, that for Hume, a person can only recognize that her moral judgments have been mistaken or that her passions are unjustified when she takes up the general view—a view that is made possible by the very sort of sympathy that is curtailed by the comparisons that underlie our biased passions and judgments in the first place.[4] Thus, the central question I here wish to raise is: Why, on Hume's account, should a person in the grip of vicious comparisons be motivated to take up the general view so that she can, first, see her error and, second, seek to align her passions and actions with what they ought to be? A Humean response to the problem of faction must be able to give a satisfying answer to this question.

The deepest resources Hume has for dealing with the problematic directions that the desire for passion of pride can take lie within his notion of the ultimate source of moral motivation, i.e., pride as a virtue. His answer to the question of what can motivate a more extensive sympathy when our passions of pride are at stake would thus have to be something like this: prideful concern for one's character can keep us from succumbing to

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[2] While the problem of the dejected self is *indirectly* related to social faction insofar as it is those with low self-esteem who are especially prone to the sorts of vicious comparisons that undermine sympathy and lead to moral blindness and faction-inducing passions, here I concentrate on the *direct* causes of faction relating to the passion of pride and to deal with the problem of securing pride in section *II.*

[3] Whether and when hatred, anger, and contempt are justified is an important issue, and one that to which Hume and Christian humanists are sure to give different answers. I want to side step these important but difficult topics and focus here on those cases in which these passions are clearly unjustified.

[4] See Korsgaard's excellent discussion of Hume's normative conception of the passions (1999, 9-12).

vicious forms of pride, the unjustified passions that flow from them, and the vicious comparisons that make them possible, since these biased responses would deprive us of a satisfactory review of ourselves.

There is an obvious problem of circularity with this response, however. On the one hand, the unjustified passions of pride to which we are tempted depend upon vicious comparisons that displace extensive sympathy. But, on the other hand, according to Hume, it is only extensive sympathy that enables us to take up the general view—that special perspective from which specifically moral judgments can be made. If it is only the general view afforded by extensive sympathy that allows one to affirm that certain passions are biased and ought not determine our actions and that virtuous pride is to be sought, how can and why should we be motivated to extend our sympathy when we are not in the perspective that can answer these normative questions in the first place?[5] In other words, how is prideful concern for our character to solve the motivational problem if it assumes what it needs to motivate (i.e., a wider, more extensive sympathy)?

This question can be understood in two ways. First, it can be seen as a *psychological* question about how we in fact come to take up the general view and how the desire for the passion of pride can play a role in motivating us to extend our sympathy so as to arrive at this perspective. Second, it can be seen as a *philosophical* question about whether the judgments we make from the general view (and, hence, which give us a conception of the sorts of character traits and appropriate passions that would yield positive self-survey for the virtuously proud) are in fact genuinely normative. This is a

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[5] Another way of stating this problem is: Why take up the general view at all? It is only from the general view that an answer of why we *should* do so could be given, but any normative reason that could be given to the person standing outside the moral perspective has no force until she has entered it.

question about why we are morally obliged to extend our sympathy at all so as to take up the general view.[6]

We can surmise an answer Hume might give to the psychological question when we appreciate the ways in which Hume's account of human nature suggests that we are impelled by our very constitution to take up the general view throughout the course of human life. As we saw in Chapter Four, our natural desire for pride coupled with our natural sympathy (both of which are captured in, what Hume calls, our "love of fame" (T 2.1.11, 206-11)) causes us to be deeply concerned with how others regard us, especially with those who matter most to us. Often when a young child receives praise from her parents, for example, she feels gladness (and usually pride), and she feels displeasure (and often humility) when she receives blame. This serves as implicit motivation to persist in the behaviors that evoke approval and to avoid those things that result in disapprobation. As she enters into a wider social world, she observes that many of those same things that her parents praise and blame are the same things that others praise and blame as well. This, she comes to understand, is because people approve of being treated in ways that are agreeable and useful to themselves, just as she approves of others who treat her in those same ways. As her sympathetic awareness develops through increasing engagement in social life, she also comes to affirm those character traits that are agreeable and useful to others themselves, just as those same traits in herself are agreeable and useful to her. In short, I think Hume could maintain that 1) the generally

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[6] I am indebted to Christine Korsgaard who differentiates between the psychological and philosophical questions that can be made with respect to the question: Why take up the general view? She also identifies a question of moral anthropology—namely, the question of "why we are inclined to *think* that the judgments we make from it are normative" (1999, 4). This third question I will indirectly address—and I give a different analysis than does Korsgaard—when I discuss the way in Hume's account of moral judgments mimics but is crucially different than the strong evaluative claims that are at the heart of our concepts of normativity.

stable way in which human nature determines that human sentiment will yield pleasure and pain in the same sorts of things, 2) our social nature as is rooted in natural sympathy (even a limited sort), and 3) our desire for the approval of others, work together to lead us to take up the general view.

This account does assume that those in one's social world will by and large approve of virtue and disapprove of vice. We saw in Chapter Four, however, that mistaken or disordered values often shape the sorts of traits one sees as virtuous and as due grounds for pride. Nonetheless, I think that Hume is right that human nature is stable enough that we can and will, at least at times, arrive at the general point of view within the course of human life. (It is, after all, not mere coincidence that many moral values are broadly held in common among different cultures.) And once we begin to view others and ourselves through the impartial standpoint of the general survey, we have entered into the normative perspective that can motivate us to actively seek to take up this perspective more regularly and with greater refinement. As we do so we acquire a greater ability to differentiate between the biased, disordered values of our social milieu from genuine virtue. Exercising a wider, more extensive sympathy is bound up with this process.

This account of the way in which we are naturally led to take up the general view, at least minimally, provides grounds for non-viciously circular psychological answer to the question of how prideful concern for character can motivate a wider sympathy when we are tempted by vicious comparison. However irregularly we take up the general view, it should afford us with insight into the distinction between excessive/unjust and due pride. The former—to which we often assign terms of disapprobation such as arrogance,

haughtiness, or conceit—we recognize as disagreeable to others, and we likewise feel

disapprobation when we see another person transparently seek to buoy up her ego by

criticizing his perceived inferiors. On this basic recognition, we do not need to have

perfectly attained virtuous pride to be nevertheless motivated by a concern that we be

persons who avoid such disagreeable behavior. Neither do we need perfect extensive

sympathy at all times to be mindful that humans, including ourselves, are prone to

partake in vicious comparison and that if we want to avoid vicious forms of pride (and

the moral blindness and unjust faction-inducing passions that ensue from it), we need

actively to seek the sort of extensive sympathy that gives us proper perspective on

ourselves and others in various circumstances. We do not, then, need first to have

extensive sympathy in a particular situation before a prideful concern for one's character

can motivate the practice of the sort of wider sympathy that can curtail the formation of

unjustly felt pride.

Although Hume does not face an insuperable motivational problem with regard to

the psychological question, however, he must be able to address the philosophical one.

For even if we do inevitably take up the general view in the course of human life, Hume

still has the burden of explaining why this special perspective acquires normative force

that is in fact binding for us such that we are right to see it as determinative for the

quality of our characters and that we are wrong to fail to see it. Relatedly, he must

explain why we ought to take up this perspective when we are operating from our

immediate, biased passions. In what follows I will argue that Hume's moral philosophy

cannot generate the normativity needed in order to account for why prideful concern for

character *should* motivate, and I will then later discuss the subtle but important practical

implications of this lack.

I want to situate the issue of normativity in Hume within the way in which he

seeks to develop a secular ethic that does not depend upon specific answers to larger

metaphysical and religious questions. Prior to Hume, moral theorists by and large and to

differing degrees tended to appeal to some transcendent moral source or some larger

cosmic view to ground claims regarding what is most noble about human beings as well

as why we are obligated to pursue virtue. This is especially evident in ancient and

medieval thinkers who gave teleological and eudaimonist accounts of ethics. Aristotle,

for example, appeals to our rational element as what makes us specifically human, but

also he argues that it is our noblest feature insofar as it bears the most likeness to the

divine (i.e., the Unmoved Mover) (see NE X.7, 1177b-1178a). Employing our rationality

in characteristically human ways is integral to his whole account of the virtues and of

why we ought to pursue them. Although modern moral theorists tended to reject

eudaimonism and often sought to be more metaphysically minimalistic in their ethical

theories, most still had recourse to some sort of broader metaphysical view to justify

certain components of their accounts. We saw, for instance, in Chapter Two that Hume's

immediate predecessor Hutcheson accounts for our having a 'moral sense'—that curious

faculty of human nature that enables us to identify virtue and vice—by appealing to its

divine bestowal from a providential God. His metaphysical picture supports his claim that

the judgments delivered by our moral sense should trump the judgments that issue from

our other senses should they come into conflict.[7]

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[7] See Michael Gill's helpful discussion of the place of theism in Hutchenson's moral system (2006, 181-200, 214, 217).

It represents a crucial shift in the tradition of moral philosophy that Hume seeks to articulate and defend an account of ethics solely upon the resources made available by a secular, non-teleological science of man. So while Hume shows how our capacity for sympathy and generality enables us to distinguish between virtue and vice and explains how we come to have a common language of praise and blame, he does not, and cannot, appeal to any deeper explanation for why sympathy is metaphysically special.[8] Of sympathy he says, "It is needless to push our researches so far as to ask, why we have humanity or a fellow-feeling [i.e., sympathy] with others. It is sufficient, that this is experienced to be a principle in human nature. We must stop somewhere in our examination of causes; and there are, in every science, some general principles, beyond which we cannot hope to find any principle more general (EPM 219-20, fn. 1).[9]

Hume maintains then that sympathy (or fellow-feeling and humanity) is an original principle that we find when we observe human nature. But it is one principle among many. Hume thus needs to explain why we should seek to extend our sympathy over and against our other original principles that might run contrary to it, such as our natural desire for revenge or for the passion of pride. Why not, for example, champion will to power as Nietzsche did and see overcoming as the best expression of human flourishing? Why not give full credence to the competitive impulse in humans rather than seek to restrain it through extending our sympathy?[10]

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[8] See Korsgaard's discussion (1999, 20-21).

[9] In footnote #61 of Chapter Two I discuss the relationship between sympathy (which he maintains to be the source of moral distinctions in the *Treatise* (see, e.g., T 3.3.6.1, 393-94)) and fellow-feeling or the 'sentiment of humanity' (which he tends to speak of as the source of moral distinctions in the second *Enquiry*).

[10] In *II.* I do show that there are some tensions in Hume with respect to what sort of place to give our tendency towards comparison and competition in relation to sympathy. He is not as clear in this regard as one would wish.

Hume's response, I think, would first be to point out that it is sympathy, not other original principles, that help explain how we come to have a common language of praise and blame and are able to make specifically moral judgments at all. Although he may grant that we have no normative reason for privileging sympathy over other competing principles in human nature prior to taking up the general view, once we find our way into the general view (which we inevitably do in the course of human life) we are in the moral perspective that enables us to see why sympathy ought to be prioritized and extended, as well as why our biased passions ought to be subdued.

This response is inadequate, however, since it fails to explain why what we *regard* as normative when taking up this special perspective in fact *is* normative. Otherwise put, it does not explain how and why the general view yields strong normativity in addition to the mere phenomenological experience of it.[11] To see this point more clearly I want to return to Charles Taylor's distinction between strong and weak evaluation that was discussed in *I.a.ii* of Chapter Four. Recall that strong evaluations are qualitative distinctions of worth, which we understand to be categorically normative for our desires. Weak evaluations, by contrast, judge that something is a good insofar as it best satisfies the desires we happen to have. 'Virtue' and 'vice' are terms of strong evaluation; and unless one accepts a reductive account of these terms, they are meant to express truly higher and lower modes of life in which we show ourselves to be morally

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[11] By "strongly" normative, I mean that we have a genuine moral obligation to feel and act in certain ways regardless of how we happen to feel. We can contrast this with a kind of "weak" sort of normativity, where the sense that we "ought" to do something means nothing more than that it would be a prudential means for attaining some desired end (e.g., if you want to play the oboe well, you ought to practice, or if you want others to like you, you ought to learn to be kind). Certainly, these two senses of normativity are not mutually exclusive. On a traditional eudaimonist accounts of ethics, for example, what we ought to do in a strongly normative sense is also thought to be pleasant and useful to the person of virtue (see Aristotle's NE 2.3.1004 b29-1105a1). I will show, however, that even though Hume's moral philosophy resembles eudaimonism insofar as it emphasizes a happiness that ultimately depends upon a noble pride in virtue, it can only support weak normativity.

dull if we fail to recognize this distinction and to pursue the former. We saw that Hume himself freely employs strongly evaluative language in his morally exhortative passages. He describes the sensible knave as "base" and "villainous" and declares that the knave relinquishes the "unbought satisfaction" of virtue in favor of "worthless toys and gewgaws" and the "empty amusements of luxury and expense" (EPM 283-84). By employing these terms, Hume is not just asserting that he does not prefer knavery; he is really claiming that we *ought* not prefer knavery and that we are morally obtuse if we do. I want to show, however, that in using these strong evaluative terms and, more crucially, in claiming that the life of virtue is qualitatively higher than knavery, he goes beyond what his methodology allows him to say.

Indeed, to be consistent with his empiricist commitments Hume only has recourse to weakly evaluative terms (e.g., pleasure and pain or expedient and disadvantageous) when he sets out to trace the concept of virtue to its original impressions. In a manner true to his method he maintains that virtue is a term we apply to those qualities that are *agreeable* and *useful* to ourselves and others,[12] and that when we judge a character to be virtuous, our judgment involves pleasure of a particular kind—a calm and pleasing sentiment of approbation felt from the general survey.[13] Hume's attempt to give a science

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[12] It is worth noting the contrast with Aristotle here. Aristotle distinguishes between the pleasant, the useful, and the noble and argues that the virtues are all three (NE 2.3.1004 b29-1105a1). Aristotle has a metaphysic that can explain the category of the noble: he has an account of higher and lower faculties situated in an account of higher and lower being based on a thing's affinity to the Unmoved Mover, as well as a teleological conception of nature oriented towards its own perfection. Hume's account lacks the category of the noble, and he cannot metaphysically ground such a category so long has he rejects teleology and remains within the scientific language of pleasure and pain. (We can see Hume's explicit rejection of appeals to teleology in his letter to Hutcheson (Letter 13). He says, "I cannot agree to your Sense of *Natural*. Tis founded on final Causes; which is a Consideration, that appears to me pretty uncertain & unphilosophical. For pray, what is the End of Man? Is he created for Happiness or for Virtue? For this Life or for the next? For himself or for his Maker? Your Definition of *Natural* depends upon solving these Questions, which are endless, & quite wide of my Purpose" (LDH, 33).

[13] I hold something of the view that our judgments of value point to objective value, and that while emotions are constitutive of these judgments, our judgments of value are not reducible to them as the

of man furthermore requires him, I think, to take a reductionist view of virtue and moral judgments; not only do certain sorts of impressions give rise to our concept of virtue on Hume's account, but I think he must also maintain that we are not empirically warranted in claiming anything more about them. In other words, we can neither maintain that virtue really *means* or *is* anything beyond those generally agreeable and useful traits as ascertained when taking the impartial, general view. (Whether it is important for virtue to mean more than this is a question I will take up later in this section.)

Hume is able to slide almost imperceptibly into strong evaluative language, however, because his reductive and necessarily weakly evaluative empirical account brilliantly, but only seemingly, captures two interrelated elements of the categorical character of our moral (and therefore strongly evaluative) judgments—namely, that morality is objective (which includes the sense we can be right or wrong about what is virtuous) and holds universally (what I judge to be virtuous I take to be not an expression of my preference but, rather, a trait that is good for human beings as such). Hume mimics the moral objectivity component when he appears to appeal to objective values, as he does, for example, when he speaks of intrinsic value and when relies upon a sort of normative conception of the passions, which is assumed when he refers to feelings that are unjust, biased, or artificial. (We saw this normative conception of the passions at work in his account of pride. Excessive or vicious pride is unjustly felt pride, whereas virtuous pride is pride felt in due proportion to one's merits.) What Hume cannot mean by intrinsic value or by referring to just and unjust emotional responses is that there are

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emotivists or error theorists contend. For accounts of the emotions that I think have it right, see Martha Nussbaum's *Upheavals of Thought*, John Macmurray's *Reason and Emotion* (Chapter One), and Edith Stein's *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* (pp. 157-167). But Hume's account points in a more reductionistic direction, as I go on to explain above.

mind-independent values that are categorically normative for our desires regardless of what we happen to desire. Hume is a sentimentalist subjectivist about value, claiming that "[o]bjects have absolutely no worth or value in themselves. They derive their worth merely from passion" (ESY 166). Nevertheless, from *within the standpoint of our agreement of sentiment* as is secured by the general view, Hume can speak of just and unjust emotional responses, right and wrong moral judgments. It should be noted, however, that what a just emotional response or correct moral judgment must mean for Hume is nothing more than that it rightly tracks what does in fact make humans generally happy on the basis of intersubjective agreement about human happiness and is supported by an account of our common human nature and operation of the passions. It cannot mean that there are genuine values that determine how we *ought* to feel.

Hume is able to mimic the sense in which morality is binding for us all by arguing 1) that on the basis of human nature, there is widespread agreement in our emotional responses and, 2) that on the basis of sympathy, we are able to see that the same traits that are agreeable and useful for us are also agreeable and useful for others and vice versa. He is therefore able to give an empirically descriptive account of our moral language that is able to explain why we take certain traits to be virtuous for human beings as such. It appears, then, that the virtues are the same for us all and that we ought all ought to pursue them (because, so he tries to argue, virtue will best conduce to our happiness). Notice, however, that this universality only holds if it is empirically true that all human beings share the same fundamental emotional responses.[14] And even if we do, the sense that we

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[14] It is worth pointing out that Hume's account of virtue is contingent upon how human passions happen to operate; if human desire were radically different, virtue would also have to be other than it is. Interestingly and ironically, in this way Hume's account bears resemblance to the theological voluntarism,

"ought" to pursue virtue is necessarily a weak ought. Hume cannot explain why agreed

upon pleasure and expedience *should* be strongly valued;[15] taking up a particular

perspective (the general view) may explain some of what we are doing *when* we make

strong evaluations, but it does not justify the *move to* strong evaluations.[16]

Crucially, however, even if Hume is right that we for the most part agree about

what is agreeable and useful to human beings as such (see T 3.3.1.7, 368)—a claim that is

itself certainly contestable—and even if he is therefore able to speak in a modified way

about the universal application of our moral concepts and the rightness or wrongness of

our ethical judgments, his account can never legitimately move beyond weak evaluations,

even as it resembles certain aspects of strong evaluations. His account is, therefore,

insufficient to establish any strong view of normativity and, correspondingly, of

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though for Hume it is not God's will but human desire (both of which could have been otherwise) that determines what is good and bad.

[15] It is a significant matter of debate whether Hume intended to offer an account of normativity in the first place or if he merely sought to give a descriptive account of our common language of moral praise and blame. Gill, for example, makes a strong case for the view that at least the *Treatise* account is meant to do only the latter (2006, 201-3, 309-314n2). Gill cites Hume's letter to Hutcheson (Letter 13) in which Hume addresses Hutcheson's concern that Hume's moral philosophy in the *Treatise* "wants a certain Warmth in the Cause of Virtue" and emphasizes that he is taking up the role of an "Anatomist" whose task is to "discover its most secret Springs & Principles" of the mind rather than that of a "Painter" who seeks to "describe the Grace & Beauty of its Actions." Nevertheless, Hume does stress that "An Anatomist, however, can give very good Advice to a Painter… And in a like manner,…a Metaphysician may be very helpful to a Moralists." He also says that he is "ambitious of being Esteemed a Friend to Virtue," yet he must limit himself to the Anatomist's task out of concern for taste, "otherwise I must despair of ever being servicable to Virtue (LDH 32-33). So, even *if* Gill is right, over and against important commentators who argue that Hume is offering an account of normativity (he engages in particular with Baier 1991, Korsgaard 1996, and Sayre-McCord 1994), it is clear that Hume wants his descriptive account to be morally informative. Moreover, as I have mentioned in Chapter Two, in the second *Enquiry* Hume clearly moves to moral exhortation at points, takes it as a burden of his moral philosophy that he must give an account of moral motivation, and he uses his account of morality to critique religious morality and artificial lives. I have thus been assuming that Hume wants his descriptive account to be normative. Whether or not Hume meant his moral philosophy to be merely descriptive, however, what is important for my purposes is to show the weaknesses of Hume's secular ethic with respect to grounding and motivating virtue, and these weaknesses hold in either case.

[16] In the same way, neo-Darwinian accounts of why we come to regard certain traits as virtuous (because it is necessary for the continuation of the species), explain psychologically how we have come to regard something as good but not why we are obligated to pursue it.

objectively valid moral truth that goes beyond intersubjective agreement.[17] Hume's

reductive account of our moral language, then, cannot ground what we, in our pre-

philosophical moral discourse, take to be the case—i.e., that our moral judgments are

recognitions of real values that make claims upon us. What Hume does give us is an

account of what he regards as the most satisfying kind of life based on a careful

observation of human nature. On this basis he may seek to convince us to pursue virtue

(i.e., those traits that are useful and agreeable to ourselves and others) by attempting to

persuade us that doing so is our surest means to happiness. In fact he does exhort in such

a way in his concluding section of the second *Enquiry*. There he says,

> But what philosophical truths can be more *advantageous* to society, than those
> here delivered, which represent virtue in all her genuine and most engaging
> charms, and make us approach her with ease, familiarity, and affection? The
> dismal dress falls off, with which many divines, and some philosophers, have
> covered her… She talks not of *useless* austerities and rigours, suffering, and self-
> denial. *She declares that her sole purpose is to make her votaries and all
> mankind, during every instant of their existence, if possible, cheerful and happy…
> The sole trouble which she demands, is that of just calculation, and a steady
> preference of the greater happiness*. (EPM 279, emphases mine)

Leaving aside the question of whether Hume's claim is in fact correct, it is important to

note here that between his account that it is to our advantage to pursue agreeable and

useful traits (what we call "virtues") and an account that that we categorically *ought* to

pursue virtue (understood as traits that are noble or constitutive of a "higher" mode of

life) stands an unbridgeable divide.

The implications of this are striking. Hume, for example, could implore the Nazi

concentration camp guard to give up his post by arguing in various ways that his actions

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[17] See Korsgaard (1999, 13-14) for a compilation of passages from the *Treatise* that point to the centrality of agreement in Hume's moral philosophy. It makes sense that Hume would be interested in agreement not just because he was concerned to promote social peace but also because he needs to make sense of the universal applicability that we take to be part of our moral concepts, and in keeping with his empirical method, he seeks to find this universality through actual agreement (albeit of an idealized sort).

will undermine his own happiness. Hume might contend, for example, that to engage in this work the guard must radically blunt his natural sympathy, but that given his constitution, he will be unable fully to eradicate his sympathetic awareness; thus, the suffering of his victims will leave a haunting trace on his consciousness. Hume might seek to persuade him that the greater party of humankind will find his behavior revolting, hoping that such disapproval would motivate the guard to forfeit his affiliation with the Nazis. Or Hume could appeal to the possibility that he may someday have to face severe punishment if the Nazis lose the war. Hume may even claim that his behavior is "wrong," in the sense that it goes against the intersubjectively agreed upon sense of virtue as is rooted in the typical responses of sentiment that we tend to find in human nature. In making these arguments, Hume would be right on all points. But what Hume cannot consistently say is that the Nazi's behavior is simply and categorically wrong and his character objectively corrupt as we would normally understand it. Hume cannot use such strongly evaluative language in the usual way in which it is meant.

Now I wish to return to the philosophical issue of moral motivation as it pertains to the unnecessary problems of factions that arise due to our desire for the passion of pride and our propensity to secure it unjustly. (At this point we can note that "unjustly" is to be understood as departing from the judgments that would issue from the general view, not as being wrong in a more strongly normative sense.) Hume cannot claim that we categorically *ought* extend our sympathy, tame our tendency to secure pride unjustly, and correct our unjustified faction-inducing emotions that stem from undue pride. All he can do is seek to persuade us that we will be happier if we do so, given his account of what

human beings are like.[18] What he would need to argue, then, is that although the passion of pride is inherently agreeable, we will he happier if we forsake undue pride that is procured at the cost of vicious comparison.

When recommending most virtues, Hume's approach is to show how they contribute to our happiness either 1) directly, by being immediately agreeable or useful to ourselves (as do, e.g., the virtues of cheerfulness, magnanimity, industry, prudence) or 2) indirectly, through the sympathy we have with others and by the positive perception they take towards us for giving them pleasure (as do, e.g., the virtues of good manners, wit, decency, humanity, generosity, beneficence) (see EPM IX.2, 280-1). Deflating our passion of pride is obviously not immediately agreeable to ourselves. But, as I suggested above, there is a degree to which vicious forms of pride (e.g., conceit, arrogance, etc.), vicious comparison, and the unjustified passions that arise from the unchecked desire for the passion of pride evoke the disapprobation of others, and in this way our concern for the approval of others can motivate overcoming these vicious tendencies.

What, however, might Hume say to a person with an unjustified pride who is able to enjoy her perceived superiority without revealing it to others (perhaps she successfully conceals her pride with the social grace of modesty)?[19] What can be said to a person whose unjustified pride and faction-inducing passions are affirmed by the untutored

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[18] And in fact this is just what he does do when he addresses the question of moral motivation in general at the end of the second *Enquiry*. He says, "Or what theory of morals can ever serve any useful purpose, unless it can show, by a particular detail, that all the duties which it recommends, are also the true interest of each individual? The peculiar advantage of the foregoing system seem to be, that it furnishes proper mediums for that purpose" (E IX.2, 280).

[19] We might ask whether Hume would regard a socially undetected, unjustified pride to be a problem, since on his account, pride is agreeable and largely advantageous to the person who feels it, and his account of modesty seems to imply that if pride is not socially detected, then it is not doing any harm to others (I say more on this point in section *I.* of Chapter Six). I do, however, think that vicious pride has considerably negative effects on the prideful person herself (insofar as it can cultivate an egocentric orientation, foster inattentiveness to others, and excite the afflictive emotions of hatred, envy, and so on). Undue pride can also lead faction by triggering faction-inducing emotions or deprive another of the means to cultivate a healthy self-esteem, even if that pride is not noticed or condemned by others.

emotional responses of those around her or at least from those whose approval especially matters to her?[20] It would seem harder to explain here how one's individual happiness would be better secured by forgoing one's pride, especially since Hume acknowledges the advantages of pride, even when it is excessive (T 3.3.2.8, 381).

The motivational problem posed by vicious pride that fails to meet with social disapproval is thus in many ways analogous to the challenge of the sensible knave.[21] In both instances, secret injustice and hidden or socially approved vicious pride could seem to reap more pleasure for the individual than justice and a properly subdued pride,[22] making it difficult to see how Hume can establish his claim that virtue is always in the individual's best interest (see EPM IX.2, 280). Significantly, it is in response to the knave's challenge that Hume appeals to the motivational significance of a prideful concern for one's character, for it enables him to claim that the "invaluable enjoyment of a character" procures a greater happiness than does the immediate pleasure that the unjust "acquisition of worthless toys and gewgaws" can provide (EPM IX.2, 283). Presumably

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[20] It is not sympathy with the disapproval of anyone that makes a crucial difference but sympathy with those are 'relevant others' for the one-sympathizing (I unfortunately do not know who to credit for coining this phrase). An adolescent may have disapproval from her teacher for her smart-aleck arrogance, but she may be largely indifferent to her teacher. For her, approval from those peers that she picks out as being the important ones to please (say, those ones who like her for cleverly attempting to show up her teacher) will be more decisive.

[21] One important difference, however, is that the knave is usually aware of his knavery, whereas, as was pointed out in the last chapter, we are often fail to see when our pride is vicious and our faction-inducing emotions are unjustified. Thus, the motivational problems surrounding unjust pride pertain not only to how to motivate us to forego immediate but vicious forms of pride but also how to see when our pride needs correcting in the first place.

[22] Hume notes how difficult it is to motivate action that seems to oppose our immediate self-interest. He says,

> But however the general principle of our blame or praise may be corrected by those other principles, it is certain they are not altogether efficacious, nor do our passions often correspond entirely to the present theory. It is seldom men heartily love what lies at a distance from them, and what no way redounds to their particular benefit; as it is no less rare to meet with persons who can pardon another any opposition he makes to their interest, however justifiable that opposition may be by the general rules of morality. Here we are contented with saying, that reason requires such an impartial conduct, but that it is seldom we can bring ourselves to it, and that our passions do not readily follow the determination of our judgment. (T 3.3.1.18, 372)

the same sort of appeal would be made in response to the problems of unjust pride: the desire for "inward peace of mind, consciousness of integrity, a satisfactory review of our own conduct" (EPM IX.2, 283)—i.e., virtuous pride—can motivate extensive sympathy and honest self-appraisal over vicious comparison, even when doing so is immediately disagreeable and meets with social disapprobation.

Interestingly, it is precisely when Hume appeals to the motivational significance of the desire for a positive review of one's character that he makes free use of strongly evaluative language. In light of my argument in section *I.a.ii.* of Chapter Four that strong evaluation is needed to make sense of the phenomenon of pride, it should come as no surprise that Hume lapses into strongly evaluative language when he appeals to the desire for virtuous pride as a ground for moral motivation. I want to show, however, that once Hume's strongly evaluative language is unmasked for what it is on his account (namely, those particular sentiments of pleasure and pain to which our strongly evaluative concepts can be traced), he is unable to give a satisfying answer to the philosophical question posed above. To see why this is the case, I want first to explain just what work strong evaluation is doing in Hume's response to the knave's challenge.

To do so, it will be helpful to review why weak evaluations are typically insufficient to generate the passion of pride. A weak evaluative judgment determines a thing to be good because it satisfies a preference we happen to have; hence, when deciding between weakly valued goods, we perform something of a cost-benefit analysis to determine which good will best fulfill our preferences. Since weakly valued goods are not seen as determinative for our desires, these sorts of judgments lack any binding sense that we categorically ought to pursue one good over another. Correspondingly, in

weighing a decision between what we regard to be weak goods, the quality of our selfhood is not at stake; we do not see ourselves as becoming more virtuous or vicious, noble or base, expressing a higher or lower mode of existence through our choice. Rather, our concern when deciding between weak goods is whether we accurately calculate which course of action will produce more pleasure.[23]

For this reason, as I previously argued, it is difficult to make sense of how standing in relation to some weakly held good is sufficient to produce pride. Since weakly valued goods are valued simply *because* we prefer them, it is unclear why we would take pride in ourselves for being related to them. We can appreciate this point when we notice that the sorts of comparisons we make with others that are relative to pride and humility are not mere descriptions of preferences and the ability to satisfy preferences; they are comparisons by which we feel ourselves to be qualitatively superior or inferior. It is the strong evaluative nature of pride that makes sense of why, as I showed in *II.a.* of Chapter Four, when our pride is diminished through comparison with others, we are often inclined to bolster ourselves up by making false strong evaluative judgments about them (e.g., we interpret our vice as a virtue, attribute vices to the person to whom we compared ourselves, and so on). Indeed, it would seem that for pride to arise we need a sense that we stand in right relation to something that is worthy of pride, not simply to something that happens to give us pleasure. (And certainly *if* it were possible to feel pride in what we take to be a weak good, such pride would not be as deep or enduring as a pride rooted in a what we regard as a strong good.)

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[23] If we have reason to think that others have the same general responses of pleasure and pain as we do (e.g., on the basis of a common human nature, as Hume argues), we may judge that others fail to calculate in a way that is most advantageous for satisfying their preferences, but we cannot on this basis judge the quality of their characters (unless we strongly evaluate being a good calculator).

We especially see the necessity of strong evaluation when we look not just at what can generate the passion of pride, but when we look at what is needed for the development of specifically virtuous pride—i.e., the sort of pride that serves as the ultimate source of moral motivation for Hume. As I discussed in section *II.* of Chapter Three, Hume regards virtuous pride as a trait by which we tend to have passions of pride that are proportionate to their causes, as would be affirmed by the general view (see T 3.3.2.1, 378; T 3.3.2.8, 381). For Hume this appears to require not just feeling pride for those values that can be affirmed from the general view but feeling pride proportionate to the relative worth of various goods in relation to each other. Virtuous pride is primarily concerned with being able to take pride in what Hume suggests is most worthy of pride— namely, pursuing the life of virtue (see EPM IX.2, 283-84).[24] The notion, however, that virtuous pride involves due pride in what is most deserving of pride (i.e., virtue) necessarily depends upon qualitative distinctions of worth that are characteristic of strong evaluations.

We have seen, though, that Hume's secular, quasi-scientific framework cannot support the strong normativity needed to ground the strong evaluations upon which virtuous pride depends. As I have argued, on Hume's analysis, virtue, a strongly evaluative term, in fact cloaks a sophisticated kind of weak evaluation about what is pleasurable and useful for human beings based on our human nature. There is no strong normativity that arises when we take up the general view and judge certain traits to be

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[24] As I pointed out, Hume appeals to a rough hierarchy of value (presumably as would be ascertained when taking the general survey): of greatest value are the virtues, followed by companionship, study, health, and natural beauty, and last of all wealth (EPM IX.II, 283-84; see also EPM IX.I, 276). Due pride consists not only in having pride in that which is valuable but in feeling pride in proper measure to the worth of the good of which one is proud. As I suggested, a person who is wealthy, and thus would merit pride in her wealth, nevertheless does not have virtuous pride if she overrates the value of wealth and hence of herself for being wealthy.

virtues because they are useful or agreeable to ourselves or to others.[25] But once this is

granted, it becomes difficult to see how prideful concern for one's character can serve as

a philosophical explanation to the problem of moral motivation. If Hume could give an

account of normativity that would accord with our strong evaluative sense, then he could

explain how it really is beneath our dignity to forgo the life of virtue for "worthless

gewgaws" or for an "unjust" sense of self-worth. But we only can consistently see vice as

being decisive for the quality of our selfhood if we see it as being truly wrong, base, or

low, and, correspondingly, if we see virtue as making a real demand on us regardless of

what we may happen to desire.[26] Indeed, if we weigh "virtue" or "virtuous behavior" (be

it justice, subduing excessive pride, etc.) against "vice" in solely weak evaluative terms,

then we would not have reason to feel any self-approving pleasure (i.e., pride) in

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[25] A further upshot of this discussion is that if indeed we choose certain character traits for the sake of pleasure, Hume seems to have given us an instrumentalized account of the virtues (I explain this point further in *II.* of Chapter Six). This contradicts what he wants to maintain in "Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature"—that we do not pursue virtue *for the sake of* the pleasure it brings as the egoists would claim but, rather, that pleasure only follows upon pursuing virtue because we love virtue in the first place (ESY 85-86). Hume rightly captures our moral psychology in making this claim, but his framework cannot explain it. We do feel the most significant sort of self-approval when we embody those values that we regard as most worthy, but Hume cannot account for why certain values *are* worthy beyond saying that because our human nature is what it is, we agree that these values are agreeable and the useful when taking an impartial perspective.

If Hume could ground a strongly evaluative view of the virtues, he would be able, I think, to show what he claims to be the case in this same essay—that concern for one's character and love of virtue are two sides of the same coin. A person can love virtue for its own sake, and because she loves virtue, she desires for her character to be aligned with what she loves and affirms as categorically good (or, stated from the other direction as Hume does, a person's concern to be a virtuous person reveals that she loves virtue). It is difficult to see, however, how prideful concern for one's character can be specifically *morally* motivating if, in the end, a weakly evaluative happiness is ultimately what is sought. More importantly, it is unclear how prideful concern for character can be motivating at all insofar as concern for character assumes that there are moral demands that are decisive for the quality of one's character to begin with. For example, with regard to the knavery issue, more pleasure is yielded to the person who refrains from knavery *if* she strongly values justice and would will look poorly on herself for failing to be just. If, however, she sees justice as merely more expedient to her own pleasure given the way human beings are constituted, then concern for character is irrelevant.

[26] I mention in a quote by Agnus Ritchie at the outset of this chapter with respect to the way Christine Korsgaard, a constructivist, appeals to concern for character to support her account of moral motivation, and his critique of her position holds for Hume as well. We can only make sense of why the quality of our selfhood and our most important self-assessments depend upon pursuing virtue if we see virtue as making absolute demands upon us.

choosing virtue nor shame in choosing vice. Hume's account of the role of prideful concern for character motivationally holds *if* we strongly value virtue, but Hume cannot explain why we *should* strongly value virtue and see vice as base.

To state the problem in another way, the weakly evaluative language of pleasure and utility—language to which his scientific approach commits him—is insufficient to explain why the person who forfeits the pleasure of vice without consequence would in fact be happier. Thus, it is precisely when it becomes difficult for Hume to argue that virtue will always conduce to individual happiness (as is the case with the sensible knave) that Hume needs to appeal to the sustained pleasure had by a satisfactory review of conduct in order to maintain that virtue really is desirable in all cases. Since, however, the pleasure of positive self-survey depends upon strongly valuing virtue—a sort of evaluation that Hume cannot explain—he is left with a crucial explanatory gap at the heart of his account of moral motivation.

This gap amounts to a vicious circle with respect to our particular question of how to motivate extensive sympathy when we are in engaged in vicious comparisons in an attempt to shore up our pride. As we saw, Hume could give a psychological answer to how we might come to be motivated to widen our sympathy. Hume cannot, however, philosophically explain why we should have prideful concern for our character insofar as his science of man cannot ground the strong evaluations that make this possible, and he thus cannot explain how prideful concern for character should motivate extensive sympathy or should lead us to pursue virtuous traits and just passions as ascertained by taking up this wider sympathetic perspective. In short, if we take Hume's moral theory to be consistent with his avowed method, prideful concern for character cannot be a

motivational source to which Hume appeals without illegitimately importing a strongly

evaluative sense of normativity that his framework cannot support. Specific to the issues

directly pertaining to the passion of pride as it relates to social faction, Hume cannot give

a philosophical account of motivation that explains why we ought to take up the general

view and forgo our illegitimate pride or unjustly-founded faction-inducing passions.

Does, however, this philosophical problem with Hume's account of moral

motivation have any practical effects for morality in general and for the problems of pride

and faction in particular? At first glance, it may seem morally undermining to have a

clear sense that our deepest moral values, values that we *experience* to be binding for us

no matter what we may happen to feel, are in fact contingent upon the sentiments human

nature just happens to have and to agree upon. And I think it is. There is a significant

disenchantment that can come with seeing our most cherished moral beliefs—beliefs that

are constitutive of our identities and of our sense of life's meaning—as mere expressions

of our own sentiments, based on how human nature contingently happens to be. This sort

of deflated conception of the moral life can, for some, be more than disquieting.[27]

Hume, however, claims his sentimentalist rejection of genuinely objective values

has "little or no influence on practice" (T 3.1.1.26, 302). "Nothing can be more real," he

says, "or concern us more, than our own sentiments of pleasure and uneasiness; and if

these be favourable to virtue, and unfavourable to vice, no more can be requisite to the

regulation of our conduct and behavior" (T 3.1.1.26, 302).[28] I will argue in section *II.* of

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[27] Indeed, it can diminish one's sense of life's meaning. See John Cottingham 2002 for a good discussion of the importance of objective meaning and purpose in life and of the limitations of finding our own "meaning" in the activities that matter to us.

[28] It is worth noting that Hume puts this in terms of a conditional clause: *if* our sentiments of pleasure are favorable to virtue, *then* nothing further is needed to regulate our behavior. And that our sentiments are favorable to virtue is of course just what he argues (which depends both upon his descriptive account of the operation of the passions as well as on lowering the standard of virtue). But to what degree is

Chapter Six that Hume's meta-ethical position can make an important practical

difference, but there is a way in which it makes less difference than one might expect.

This is, I think, because we cannot help but be strong evaluators,[29] even if we come to see

our moral convictions as lacking strong normativity and even if we cannot adequately

articulate the grounds for our deepest values, we usually still continue to think that

human beings really ought to behave in certain ways and not others. This is why Hume is

so often right that prideful concern for character can motivate virtue. Because we

regularly do experience virtue as being strongly normative, we correspondingly do

experience the quality of ourselves to be at stake in many of our decisions and want to

make the sorts of choices that enable us to see ourselves as in line with our sense of the

good. Moreover, we are constituted in such a way that, moral concepts aside, we enjoy

when others are kind, generous, and so forth, and we enjoy when others approve of us for

having these attributes.

Nevertheless, Hume's inability to ground our strong evaluations can, indeed,

diminish our moral practice in a number of more subtle ways. I will here mention them

briefly, but I will explore them in greater depth in section *II.* of Chapter Six, where I

compare Hume's secular ethics with Aquinas's Christian ethics. First, a strong account of

normativity might be very important in cases of deep moral struggle, where virtue can be

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this so? And to what degree does this rely on artifice to shape our approbations? I have noted Korsgaard's point that Hume's account of the general view implies a normative conception of the passions; thus, even according to Hume's lower aspiring ethic, some of our immediate passions may be quite biased and vicious. While Hume argues that virtue is more conducive to our pleasure given our sympathetic constitution and so forth, often virtue is difficult and does not coincide with our untutored passions. I will argue in Chapter Six, section *II.* that it is when this is the case that the loss of grounding for strong normativity can make a practical difference.

[29] Indeed, I think that the philosophical problem in Hume's account of moral motivation is often obscured by the fact that we are inevitably strong evaluators and do tend to regard those traits that are useful and agreeable to ourselves and others under the aspect of strong evaluation, and so we therefore do not notice when Hume smuggles in language he cannot justify.

seen to have ultimate significance. Second, a background metaphysical picture that supports our moral framework can enable us to articulate, and therefore live out, the good more fully. Third, a background picture, can hone our moral acuity, for example, by drawing our attention to certain moral phenomena (such as human dignity, the importance of love, etc.). Indeed, I will argue that Hume's attempt to bracket out the sort of metaphysical pictures that could make sense of strong view of normativity, as I will point out in the Conclusion, makes his account of ethics less able to transcend certain biases and more susceptible to moral decline.

These three ways in which a strongly normative grounding of our moral convictions can be motivationally significant will be pertinent to my discussion of the practical problem of what can motivate us to a wider sympathy specifically when we are in the grip of vicious comparisons in an attempt to bolster our pride. Motivating a wider sympathy in these cases is especially difficult for two reasons: 1) we often feel justified in our morally blind judgments and unjustified emotional responses that have their roots in pride and, 2) our natural propensity to pride (even to unjustified pride) makes it particularly unpleasant to acknowledge our mistakes and inferiority or even to grant the legitimacy of the other's view. It is with a view towards these practical motivational difficulties that I want to compare the resources that Hume's secular ethic and Aquinas's Christian humanist ethic has for addressing the problem of faction posed by our natural desire for the passion of pride. But to do so adequately I must lay out the philosophical account of moral motivation that Aquinas's teleological, eudaimonist perspective can provide. First, however, I want to look at Humean pride in relation to the issue of individual flourishing.

II. Proper Pride and Individual Flourishing

In section *I.* I considered the philosophical difficulty that Hume's secular framework has in explaining how to motivate overcoming the vicious comparisons that stem from our desire for the passion of pride—comparisons that result in the moral blindness and unjustified emotions that give rise to social faction. Here I want to look at the extent to which Hume's secular framework can address the problems that our desire for the passion of pride poses for individual flourishing, given that there can be significant obstacles to securing a stable, virtuous pride in a social world that will inevitably be, to varying degrees, shaped by vicious comparison and disordered values.

Although in the last section I primarily focused on the question of why we should care to reform unjustified passions of pride, in this section I focus on just or virtuous pride, insofar as I wish to consider the difficulty of cultivating a stable, well-founded self-esteem in light of social pressures against it or when we lack those talents or traits that tend to garner social recognition.[30] To do so I want to begin by re-examining Hume's account of virtuous pride in order to bring to the fore certain crucial tensions and ambiguities in Hume's conception of due pride itself. This will, in turn, allow me to bring out more sharply the challenges to developing and sustaining a stable self-esteem before others as well as the limitations of Hume's account of virtuous pride for providing the social conditions that are favorable to individual flourishing.

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[30] As I emphasized in the last chapter, I want to reiterate here that individual and social flourishing are of course inseparable. The person who has developed virtuous pride will be more capable of sympathy (since she will not seek to support her pride by vicious comparison). This will affect both her moral awareness and capacity for concord with others, and she will be more motivated to let her passions be instructed by the normative conception of the passions that arises when taking the general view, since virtuous pride entails that her concern for her character will be motivationally significant for her.

The first feature of Hume's account of virtuous pride that I wish to examine is that it does not seem to preclude enjoying one's superiority to others. In Chapter Three I emphasized that, for Hume, it is the viciously proud (i.e., those with ill-grounded conceit) who incessantly compare themselves to others and who habitually dwell upon the faults of others *in order to* elevate themselves. I argued that still, on Hume's analysis, the virtuously proud also rely on comparisons in regulating their pride insofar as comparisons are necessary to discern the extent to which one merits pride by helping us to identify whether our talents are mediocre, noteworthy, or especially exceptional. I nevertheless stressed the components of Hume's account, which rightly suggest both that the virtuously proud need not be the best in order to feel due pride for the strengths they do have and that they primarily take pride in their characteristics that merit pride instead of in being better than others. There are other components of Hume's portrayal of the virtuously proud, however, which can suggest that they often enjoy the fact that their pride-meriting characteristics make them better than many of their fellows—a stance that, I will argue, promotes the sort of vicious comparisons that I showed in Chapter Four to be so harmful.

I wish to point out at least two ways in which Hume's account of virtuous pride suggests that the virtuously proud may enjoy contemplating their superiority to others. First, Hume's primary examples of those who exhibit noble pride are characters that value themselves in part because of their superiority to others. Hume speaks of Alexander the Great's feeling of "dignity and right of empire" and Prince of Condé's approving remark of Alexander that: "Wherever he found men, he fancy'd he had found subjects"

(EPM VII, 252; T 3.3.2.12, 382).[31] See also Hume's example of the magnanimous sage

who, "conscious of his own virtue,…looks down on inferior mortals engaged in pursuit

of honours, riches, reputation, and every frivolous enjoyment" (EPM VII, 252).

Additionally, Hume includes "love of glory" as a heroic virtue that is "admired under the

character of greatness and elevation of mind [i.e., virtuous pride]" (T 3.3.2.13, 382)—a

trait that is concerned with being perceived as exceptional by others.[32]

Second, Hume's *Treatise* account of virtuous pride follows a more general

discussion about the prevalence of the principle of comparison in the operation of the

human mind, particularly in relation to our own self-conceptions. He says:

> We judge *more* of objects by comparison, than by their intrinsic worth and value;
> and regard every thing as mean, when set in opposition to what is superior of the
> same kind. But *no comparison is more obvious than with ourselves*; and hence it
> is that *on all occasions it takes place, and mixes with most of our passions*. (T
> 3.3.2.4, 379, emphases mine)[33]

On Hume's analysis, the regular operation of the principle of comparison explains why

we tend to disapprove of pride when we detect it in others; "[pride] causes uneasiness in

all men, and presents them every moment with a disagreeable comparison" (T 3.3.2.7,

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[31] See also Vitellius, who maintains a staunch sense of superiority to his tormentors (EPM VII, 253) or, Phocion, who says to one of his fellow-sufferers, "Is it not glory enough for you…that you die with Phocion?" (EPM VII, 253).

[32] Love of glory, without the right distinctions, could arguably be seen as vicious (see Aquinas's account of the vices of vainglory and ambition, discussed in *II.b.* of Chapter Four.

[33] In interpreting Hume's account of virtuous pride (see Chapter Three *II.a.*) I have tried to make sense of: 1) how comparison is always relevant to pride while doing justice to Hume's point that the virtuously proud are proud of their genuine merits and need not rely on others being worse than oneself to have pride, 2) Hume's suggestion that due pride is in principle available to all, regardless of one's station, and 3) that virtuous pride involves having a basic security or dignity of self that does not feel one's sense of worth is altered by the superior gifts of others. I have suggested that the virtuously proud do necessarily make comparative judgments and that these are necessary for gauging how much pride is proportionate to their merits. I also maintained these sorts of comparisons need not be at odds with sympathy. In the passage quoted above, however, Hume suggests that comparison and sympathy are fundamentally incompatible; he says, "This kind of comparison [i.e., comparisons with ourselves] is directly contrary to sympathy in its operation" (T 3.3.2.4, 379). I think he gets the phenomena wrong here. While comparison very often displaces sympathy in practice, these operations are not necessarily opposed. We can recognize the inferiority or superiority of our talents or traits to another without failing to sympathize with that person.

380). If, however, a disagreeable passion is naturally aroused by another person being or perceiving themselves to be superior to others (most especially to ourselves), it also follows that we naturally feel the pleasure of pride when we take ourselves to compare favorably to others.[34]

I argued in Chapter Three that Hume should be interpreted as holding that for the virtuously proud, the passion of pride is not *generated by* comparison primarily but by having that which truly warrants pride (which is discerned in part through comparison). Nevertheless, here I want to emphasize that a faithful reading of Hume also shows that comparison heightens the passion of pride in even the virtuously proud (and, given our sympathetic constitution as discussed in *I.b.* of Chapter Four, the passion of pride further increases when others treat us as being superior). In these cases, the feeling of pride may rest more on the *good* that one possesses (and which the comparison highlights) or on *being superior*, but Hume fails to make this morally relevant distinction. It thus appears that, on Hume's account, the virtuously proud may well enjoy being better than others, even if they do not engage in the petty, small-minded exercise of dwelling on others' inferiorities. But the corollary implication is that we also naturally dislike being surpassed by those whose previous (real or perceived) inferiority supported our pride. In Hume's *Treatise* account of pride, he maintains, "we *all* have a wonderful partiality for ourselves…" (T 3.3.2.10, 381, emphasis mine), and this, he suggests, is no less true of the virtuously proud than the viciously proud. Although the virtuously proud may be less

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[34] As does Hume when he outshines his classmates as a boy. See Hume's conversation with Boswell where Boswell reports that Hume said that he "used to read the *Whole Duty of Man*; that he made an abstract from the Catalogue of vices at the end of it, and examined himself by this, leaving out Murder and Theft and such vices as he had no chance of committing, having no inclination to commit them. This, he said, was strange work; for instance, to try if, notwithstanding his excelling his schoolfellows, he had no pride or vanity" (Boswell 1931, 227-228).

susceptible to swings in their self-assessments based on comparisons than the viciously proud, they are concerned with how they stand in relation to others just the same.

It therefore seems that even virtuous pride cannot entirely escape the implication that a stable self-esteem before others is to some degree a good of competition. While I have argued that, for Hume, the virtuously proud need not be the best to have the security of selfhood characteristic of such pride, it also seems that they must have sufficient merit to enjoy a respectable social position relative to their social station. In other words, they may need to be better than a good number of others for pride to arise (enough virtue that sets them above or at least in company with ordinary people, enough talent in their work to make them at least an equal member of their community of colleagues, and so on).[35] Moreover, since Hume discusses virtuous pride primarily as greatness of mind, his account of noble pride focuses on those who are particularly great (i.e., who are on the upper end of human achievement).

It would seem that self-esteem, on Hume's account, depends upon comparison not only because virtuous pride depends upon truly meriting pride (merits of which are in part determined by comparison), but also because of the way in which social perception plays a significant role in our experience of pride. As was discussed in *I.b.* and *II.b.* of Chapter Four, pride in large part relies upon the affirmation of others, and others tend to approve of those personal traits that stand out as special by comparison to others. So, the ways in which we find ourselves in the middle or upper regions of the social ladder and enjoy the security and self-approval of our social position are often themselves supported by the approval of others precisely for being equal to or above those on the bottom.

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[35] See Michael Gill's important discussion of Hume's account of the role of comparison in pride and also in our judgments with respect to who is virtuous (2006, 244-258).

The elements of Hume's account of virtuous pride that seem to involve being (and being perceived as) equal to or better than others, however, can stand in tension with Hume's indication that the stable self-esteem constitutive of virtuous pride facilitates a wider, more extensive sympathy and mitigates vicious comparisons (see section *II.b.* of Chapter Three). The inevitably comparative component of pride threatens a wider sympathy from two directions.[36] First, to the extent that pride involves enjoying our superiority to others who are relatively near us in merit, we are vulnerable to sliding into vicious comparisons when others begin to outshine us and thereby destabilize our self-esteem. Often a ready and generous sympathy towards others relies upon a security of self tacitly afforded by being in a stable social position. Since, however, social positions are vulnerable to change, so too is our wideness or narrowness of our sympathy—perhaps to some degree even if we actively practice extensive sympathy with vigilance and attention. Second, to the extent that virtuous pride rests on true greatness (which by definition involves being superior to most in certain respects), it is prone to produce contempt or misanthropy for the unimpressive masses.[37] While in the first case it is our close proximity to the unremarkable that sparks sympathy-displacing comparisons, in the second case it is one's considerable distance from the normal person that provokes them. In the first instance, the sympathy-displacing comparisons to which we succumb are made with those we find to be worse than ourselves in order to boost our self-assessments by way of contrast, whereas in the second instance, if our pride is justified, our contempt may be well-founded but still can be destructive to sympathy. (We considered the

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[36] I mentioned in footnote #33 that Hume says that all comparison is counter to sympathy. While I think he is wrong about this, his mistake reveals that pride, as he understands it, is ultimately competitive.

[37] See T 2.2.10 for Hume's account of contempt and its relation to pride, hatred, and the principle of comparison.

problems of contempt through looking at the character of Ivan Karamazov in *II.c.* of Chapter Four.)

One might argue, however, that although pride is always to some degree unstable and vulnerable to sympathy-displacing comparisons, if due pride is primarily taken in virtue rather than skills, appearance, or possessions, as is the case on Hume's account of virtuous pride, the pride would be more stable and less susceptible to competition than vicious pride. While I do think that this is importantly true in certain respects, it is worth noting that virtue itself can subtly become an object of competition. We can imagine, for example, that among those working together for a just cause, tensions and disputes might erupt over how far one is willing to go in living up to the just ideal, how much one is willing to sacrifice for it, etc. On this point it is interesting that Hume explicitly links love of virtue with love of fame (EPM 276). Love of fame, he says, prompts in us the habit of seeing ourselves from the perspective of others and evokes in us the desire to possess those traits that others would especially praise (i.e., the virtues).[38] But Hume's use of the word 'fame' suggests the dominant presence of comparison in the moral life.[39] To achieve fame requires us to stand out as exceptional, and this introduces a competitive element in the pursuit of virtue itself.[40]

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[38] I showed in Chapter Four, however, that Hume is too quick to assume this will be the case. If our social milieu has disordered values, distorted conceptions of the virtues, and other forms of moral blindness, genuine virtue will not be as recognized as Hume's moral theory suggests.

[39] Again, I do not mean to imply that we can or should do away with comparison when it comes to virtue. Comparison between the characters of others and between others and ourselves is important for honing our moral acuity. The moral achievement, in my view, is not to let such comparisons undermine sympathy with those who are morally less developed. I will later suggest how the virtue of humility (which I argue can be to some degree articulated and defended from within a secular Humean framework), is an important character trait for making and keeping us alive to the humanity of others.

[40] Interestingly this was Jesus's central critique of the Pharisees. Their desire to be and to be perceived as better than others made them spiritually blind to those they saw as inferior as well as overly preoccupied with the outward markers of religious piety rather than the inner reality that religious practice was meant to cultivate. Hume does not seem to be appropriately concerned to warn against this moral

Moreover, when we look more carefully at Hume's account of virtuous pride, it sometimes appears to *involve* holding contempt for the vicious and unaccomplished or in other ways stands in tension with sympathy (and the benevolence that often flows from it). Hume says, for example, that it is a mark of meanness to "degrade" oneself by association with "undeserving inferiors" (EPM 253), suggesting that contempt for them is required by proper pride. Furthermore, as previously mentioned Hume describes the magnanimous sage as someone who, "conscious of his own virtue,...elevates himself above every accident of life; and securely placed in the temple of wisdom, *looks down on inferior mortals* engaged in pursuit of honours, riches, reputation, and every frivolous enjoyment" (EPM VII, 256, emphasis mine).[41] Moreover, Hume observes that noble pride (in the form of heroism or military glory) leads to great destruction but nevertheless affirms this sort of pride as virtuous (T 3.3.2.15, 383). It is thus unclear whether and to what extent virtuous pride (and just contempt) might stand in tension with extensive sympathy (or the sentiment of "humanity," as he likes to say in the second *Enquiry*) and benevolence.[42]

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pitfall, and his lack of concern is reflected in the ambiguous nature of Humean pride especially when compared with Christian humility, as I hope will become clear in the following chapter.

[41] This passage points to another puzzle in Hume's account of virtuous pride. On the one hand, Hume's moral philosophy is in many ways very clearly a lower aspiring, less demanding vision of the good life than we find in most other moral philosophies that have previously prevailed in the history of thought. Indeed, I have stressed that Hume's moral philosophy is meant to counter what he saw to be the overly stringent and anti-natural moral demands of the Scottish Calvinism in which he was raised. On the other hand, however, if we esteem greatness of mind as a virtue and if true greatness belongs only to those who have achieved particular excellence, then it seems to push in the direction of high aspiration where we should seek virtue perhaps even to the neglect of (and contempt of) ordinary human happiness and those who enjoy it. Hume's discussion of the magnanimous sage is especially interesting in this regard.

[42] If virtuous pride does involve just contempt, though, it is not clear what sort of contempt would count as just for Hume. We can raise this issue in terms of how Hume might respond to the stances of two characters in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*: Alyosha, a monk in training, and Ivan, the atheist intellectual who, though in some ways drawn to the Christian vision of love, finds in himself deep contempt for the wickedness he sees in human beings, a contempt that occludes his capacity to love others. Would Ivan Karamazov's pride and contempt be virtuous or excessive by Hume's account. Is Ivan's lack of ability to love "up close" (236-37) a right response to human failure or a moral defect? My sense is that Hume ends up somewhere between Ivan and Alyosha on this question. Hume seems not to seek, nor to endorse,

I now want to consider how Hume's insight into how deep comparison and competition run in human life and how the tensions and ambiguities in Hume's account of virtuous pride relate to the problem of individual flourishing posed in the last chapter. There are two issues that I want to take up. First, if even virtuous pride is itself supported by comparison, is self-esteem ultimately a good of competition in which there are inevitably winners or losers? To what extent, then, is there hope that those individuals who lack noteworthy skills or talents (or, worse, are severely disabled or have been so emotionally damaged that they are incapable of normal relationships and functioning) can develop a healthy self-esteem on a Humean account of pride and its relation to social life? If they cannot, is it possible to avoid the negative social effects that issue from a low

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the sort of active love to which Alyosha aspires. (Hume would, I think, be apt to agree with Ivan's remark to Alyosha that the monk breathing into the sick man's mouth displays a sort of "laceration" of the self. See Hume's critique of the Catholic saint Bellarmine who "patiently and humbly allowed the fleas and other odious vermin to prey upon him. *We shall have heaven,* said he, *to reward us for our sufferings; But these poor creatures have nothing but the enjoyment of the present life*" (NHR X, 164). Such extremes of religiously-inspired behavior Hume seems to find absurd.) But neither does Hume share Ivan's disgust at humanity. It is hard to know how much if this, though, has to do with Hume's disposition rather than a rigorous philosophical account of what deserves contempt and how it relates to virtuous pride.

    The difficulty of discerning when and to what extent our pride (and contempt) is merited, and hence virtuous, is further complicated by Hume's observation that we are prone to mistakes in our self-assessments. He says, "Nothing is more disagreeable than a man's over-weaning conceit of himself: Every one almost has a strong propensity to this vice: No one can well distinguish *in himself* betwixt the vice and virtue, or be certain, that his esteem of his own merit is well-founded" (T 3.3.2.10, 381). Moreover, although the perceptions of others can serve to correct our misguided self-assessments, we saw in the last chapter that social perception can also foster and further entrench undue pride. Our mistaken judgments about ourselves can be socially supported, when, for example, those around share our false conceptions of virtue or our disordered sense of which virtues are most important. We can think of Meletus, Socrates' accuser in the *Apology*, who sees himself as an exemplary Athenian citizen and who clearly regards both his pride in his character as well as his contempt for Socrates to be just. His success in convincing most of the jury that Socrates should be killed indicates that he receives social approval from the very people he takes to have the correct perception of what good citizenship entails. He is not open to Socrates' criticism—Socrates' approval is not importantly relevant for him since he has already branded Socrates as politically dangerous—so while he does not receive unanimous social support, he receives sufficient support to persist in his unjustly founded pride and contempt. Thus, in addition to the dangers, instabilities, and ambiguities implicit in Hume's account of pride, it also presents us with a substantial epistemological problem of how we know when our pride is in fact virtuous in light of our propensity to self-deception in this sphere. Given that unjust pride and contempt can be so harmful and so difficult to identify, it is unfortunate that Hume did not say more about the relationship between virtuous pride, contempt, sympathy/humanity, and comparison and work towards a clearer account of just what genuine greatness of mind involves.

self-esteem and an attempt to boost one's sense of self in vicious ways? Second, if the

virtuously proud and the viciously proud alike depend upon comparison for their pride, to

what degree can the social conditions that are necessary for persons to develop and

sustain a stable self-esteem be secured? We saw in the last chapter that pride, even

merited pride, to a large degree depends upon the right sort of social affirmation—

particularly from those others who matter most to us in key moments of our development.

If even the virtuously proud can lapse into vicious comparisons (which in turn lead to

moral blindness and unjustified faction-inducing emotions) or can engage in a

sympathetically closed contempt for the weaker or more vicious members of society, then

to what extent is it possible to expect that social environments can be formed so that

persons of lesser ability can have the sort of self-respect that is necessary for a good life?

With respect to the first issue, it does indeed appear that self-esteem, on Hume's

account, is ultimately a matter of competition. The fundamental reason for this lies, I

think, in Hume's secular framework and its inability to metaphysically ground human

dignity. I have mentioned in Chapter Three that Hume's account of virtuous pride seems

to appeal to some notion of pride in one's dignity (most especially one's moral dignity).[43]

It should be clear from *I.* that Hume's attempt to give a science of man prevents him from

accounting for the strong evaluative notion of dignity or from having a metaphysical

account of the human being that can make sense of the notion of human dignity as such.

Hume's empirical method describes what it finds. The concept of "dignity" appears to be

nothing other than a certain sort of approbation we feel from the general view, and we

would seem to have "dignity" insofar as we possess those traits that can be affirmed from

the general view. The more significant we take the trait to be, the more dignity those

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[43] See especially Jacqueline Taylor's "Hume on the Dignity of Pride" (2012).

traits may seem to have (e.g., we would judge that there is more dignity in courage than in cleanliness, both of which Hume regards as virtues). If dignity can only be empirically ascertained in this way, human beings are inevitably stratified on a continuum of better and worse, with no way to ground a notion of fundamental human dignity that can make sense of a basic equality beneath differences in the quality of our characters.[44] It thus does seem to be an unavoidable consequence of Hume's framework that dignity is only acquired through our praiseworthy traits and, correspondingly, that we are seen to have greater dignity or worth when we are better than others. In this way, our worth is always subject to comparison and competition.[45]

We might wonder whether Hume, like Nietzsche, would regard the Christian attempt to quiet the pervasively competitive aspect of human life as an aim that runs deeply counter to human nature and thus is liable to have its own undermining effects on human flourishing.[46] Although, unlike Nietzsche, Hume rarely suggests that the centrality of love in the Christian tradition is harmful or unintelligible,[47] he certainly does not emphasize caring for the weak, seeking out the less obvious gifts of the socially overlooked, and so forth in his moral philosophy. Nevertheless, he is concerned with the issues of social faction and securing the conditions for individual happiness—both of

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[44] This point about human dignity raises a more fundamental question for Hume about sympathy in general. Namely, ought we seek to extend our sympathy with *all* others? If so, why, to what extent, and on what basis? Why should the great have sympathy with those who they may perceive as not being worthy of sympathy, such as the morally degenerate or the pathetically weak?

[45] I do grant that our worth qua attribute is determined by how it ranks in relation to others, but the crucial issue I mean to bring out is whether there is also some underlying notion of dignity or worth that cannot be diminished or lost by comparison. For Hume I think the answer must be no.

[46] See Manzer's discussion of Hume's "surprising openness to more dangerous forms of pride" (1996, 339).

[47] He does, however, critique the monk Bellarmine, who, out of pity, allowed "fleas and other odious vermin to prey upon him" (NHR IX, 164) as well as Pascal for "endeavor[ing] to be absolutely indifferent towards his nearest relations, and to love and speak well of his enemies" because of his (superstitious) Christian commitments (EPM 343-44). While these are arguably straw man portraits of Christian love (that nevertheless contain some truth), they do raise the fundamental question of whether the central Christian virtue of charity is too high-aspiring to be healthy or even fully intelligible.

which are dramatically impacted by the passion of pride and its turbulent relationship to sympathy, as we saw in Chapter Four. Thus, it is helpful to look at the resources that Hume's secular, reductive, non-teleological framework has for coping with the difficulties that arise from pride and competition, even while he refrains from condemning our comparative and competitive impulses as such.

One way in which Hume could go about this is by making a distinction between kinds of social affirmation along the lines of Aristotle's distinction between being loved and being admired (NE VIII.8). Hume's discussion of our "love of fame" (T 2.1.11) connotes our pleasure in being admired but does not immediately suggest the more important sort of social affirmation needed for human flourishing—our need for love (a love which is based on knowledge and appreciation of one's particularity) and participation in community. The upward-looking gaze of admiration (and the corresponding downward glance of the admired-one) is at home in the comparative ranking of merit that is so pervasive in social life and often opposes sympathy. A loving affirmation of and receptivity to a person's concrete reality, on the other hand, depends upon sympathetic attention and inclines towards benevolent concern. These two types of social approval tend to promote more of their kind: the admired one is likely to relate to the other in a way that makes the comparative judgment central and the one who experiences the delight another takes in her existence is likely to reciprocate that sort of loving affirmation.[48]

Hume collapses these two forms of social approval, but he need not do so, and in fact distinguishing between them sheds important light on the relationship between

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[48] See Jules Toner's "Personal Friendship" in *Love and Friendship* for an account of the possibility of loving a person's unique way of being, a love that is not based on qualities that can become subject to competition.

affirmation, security of self, and extensive sympathy. For it seems the stability of

selfhood that facilitates a wider, more extensive sympathy and which restrains the

tendency towards vicious comparisons belongs to those who have been deeply and

consistently loved in this latter way, especially from an early age, by the important adult

figures in one's life. It is these persons who possess a secure sense of their value, even if

they are not the best or widely recognized, since they have experienced their significance

through feeling their significance to others. By contrast, those who have been regularly

admired and praised primarily for their achievements may well have due pride in their

merits, but it is difficult to see how those merits and social affirmation suffice to keep

them from those vicious comparisons that are at odds with sympathy.[49] And while they

may, indeed, have the sort of tacit security afforded to those who enjoy socially

respectable positions, they lack the more abiding sort of security experienced by those

who are deeply loved and accepted.

It looks now as if Hume needs a crucial distinction in his account of the

relationship between social perception and pride if he wants to promote a stable self-

esteem that is not critically vulnerable to competition (which would be necessary if he is

concerned to encourage a more widespread individual flourishing) and if he wants to

lessen the destructive potential of comparison and competition (and thereby to promote

greater social harmony). This possibility will become a point of further discussion in

section *III.* of Chapter Six, but it would require a clearer account on Hume's part of the

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[49] For a keen description of how some highly successful students at elite institutions (i.e., those who
have the capacity to garner much admiration for their achievements) can become incessantly comparative
and can vacillate from extreme confidence to self-berating, from looking down on their peers (while
nevertheless seeking their approval) to self-contempt, depending upon how they fare in the comparison of
the moment, see William Deresiewicz (2012, 50-55). Whether or not he over-estimates how prevalent these
dynamics are, he describes them well.

grounds of such love and of what sort of place to give comparison in human life and in the formation of our pride than Hume is perhaps philosophically equipped to provide.

We now turn to the second issue posed above: since our pride always depends to a large degree on social affirmation, how do we best create the social conditions for persons to develop healthy self-esteems, and to what extent is this possible given the prevalence of vicious forms of comparison and the moral blindness and unjustified faction-inducing passions that emerge from it? In many ways, the motivational issues discussed in *I.*, are pertinent here insofar as what is needed for these favorable social conditions is the practice of extensive sympathy and curtailment of vicious comparison. I suggested there that even though Hume cannot ground a strong evaluative sense that we ought to practice extensive sympathy and seek to curb our more biased passions pertaining to pride, the extent to which we do strongly evaluate being sympathetic persons will go some distance in fostering a social world that is attentive to and generously affirms the good in others. More fundamentally, the extent to which persons have been genuinely loved rather than merely admired is relevant to the extent to which they will have the security of selfhood and experiential orientation to relate to others in an appropriately appreciative and not in a viciously comparative manner.

Nevertheless, it is easy, even when conditions are optimal for proper affirmation and acceptance of others, to lapse into subtle comparisons, especially when Hume can offer no over-arching moral framework that can articulate worth apart from empirically recognized goods—goods which can always be grounds for comparison. Since insightful affirmation of and loving receptivity to others takes attention and willingness to forgo the pleasure of seeing oneself (whether rightly or wrongly) as greater, the absence of a

metaphysical account that can articulate why we should move towards this will, I think,

be practically less effective than one that can, as I will show in the next chapter.

This point is partially suggested by Raimond Gaita's recollection of his time

working as a ward-assistant at a psychiatric hospital in the early 1960's. It is worthwhile

to quote him at length, since his reflections on his experience are so relevant to the issues

being raised here. Gaita recalls that

> The patients were judged to be incurable and they appeared to have irretrievably lost everything which gives meaning to our lives. They had no grounds for self-respect insofar as we connect that with self-esteem; or, none which could be based on qualities or achievements for which we could admire or congratulate them without condescension. [Although family] had long ceased to visit them [and they were often] treated brutishly by the psychiatrists and nurses, [a] small number of psychiatrists did…work devotedly to improve their conditions. They spoke, against all appearances, of the inalienable *dignity* of even those patients. I admired them greatly. Most of their colleagues believed these doctors to be naïve, even fools. Some of the nurses despised them with a vehemence that was astonishing.
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> It probably didn't help their cause for the psychiatrists to speak of the inalienable dignity of the patients I described. Natural though it is to speak this way, and although it has an honoured place in our tradition, it is, I believe, a sign of our conceptual desperation and also of our deep desire to ground in the very nature of things the requirement that we accord each human being unconditional respect. To talk of inalienable dignity is rather like talking of the inalienable right to esteem. …
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> One day a nun came to the ward. …[E]verything in her demeanour towards them—the way she spoke to them, her facial expressions, the inflexions of her body—contrasted with and showed up the behaviour of those noble psychiatrists. She showed that they were, despite their best efforts, condescending, as I too had been. She thereby revealed that even such patients were, as the psychiatrists and I had sincerely and generously professed, the equals of those who wanted to help them; but she also revealed that in our hearts we did not believe this.
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> …In the nun's case, her behaviour was striking not for the virtues it expressed, or even for the good it achieved, but for its power to reveal the full humanity of those whose affliction had made their humanity invisible. Love is the name we give to such behaviour (Gaita, 17-20)

We see Gaita and some of his colleagues deeply wanting and attempting to relate

to the patients as equal in dignity and struggling to give a grounding and a language for

their sense that the patients were worthy of being regarded in this way. Because of the lack of evident empirical evidence for these claims of equal dignity, however, many of the other doctors and nurses failed to be convinced by such appeals.[50] And to a certain degree, the "noble psychiatrists" and Gaita failed to be convinced as well; they were not *fully* able to believe or to live out that which they, nevertheless, "sincerely and generously professed." Interestingly, however, the nun's capacity to love the patients, to truly relate to them as equals, Gaita recalls, revealed to him the reality and significance of their humanity. And he says, "For me, the purity of the love proved the reality of what it revealed," despite that "from the point of view of speculative intelligence, [he] allow[s] for no independent justification of her attitude" (21-22).

I want to return to Gaita's reflections on this experience in section *II.* of the next chapter. Gaita is rightly cautious about too quickly attributing the nun's behavior to her religious outlook (an outlook Gaita appreciates but does not himself share), but neither does he deny that it has importantly contributed to her moral formation. In Chapter Six I will explore just what sort of motivational and character-informing significance Christian humanism might have on issues pertaining to how to create the social conditions for promoting healthy self-esteems wherein persons are able to flourishing individually. As with the practical motivational issues surrounding the passion of pride and the problem of faction, we will better be able to pinpoint the limits of Hume's perspective after we have discussed the resources that a Christian humanist framework has for responding to the problems we have been considering.

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[50] The contrasting perspective of the doctors can perhaps be said to reflect the ambiguity that is present in Hume's account of virtuous pride: does prideful concern for one's character involve distancing oneself from the "lowly" or actively seeking sympathy with them?

CHAPTER SIX: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRISTIAN HUMANIST HUMILITY

We have seen that Hume's key criticism of Christian morality—and Christian humility as informed by the Christian moral framework—is that it undermines individual and social flourishing. I showed in Chapter Three, however, that Hume's objections to Christian humility were largely appropriate criticisms of hyper-Augustinian conceptions of humility and that Christian humanist humility (as expressed, for example, by Aquinas) mostly resists Hume's critiques. I have also highlighted the ways in which Hume's account of our natural desire for the passion of pride has problematic implications for individual and social flourishing, and I have pointed to the limitations of Hume's secular ethic and conception of virtuous pride for addressing these problems. In this chapter I want to show that a Christian humanist humility (and the Christian moral framework within which this conception of humility takes shape) can in some ways better respond to the problems of individual and social flourishing that were identified in Chapter Four.[1]

To this end, in *I.*, I show how a Christian humanist's perspective and Hume's secular perspective would differently shape their respective conceptions about what is involved in being rightly related to our strengths and weaknesses, even while they are united in seeing self-esteem as a morally important good and self-hatred as vicious. In *II.* I explain how a eudaimonistic ethic that is situated in a Christian humanist teleological framework is able to give a satisfying philosophical account of moral motivation that has practical significance. In *III.* I explore the ways in which Christian humanist humility is a

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[1] I will primarily be discussing humility as articulated by Aquinas, since he is our representative Christian humanist, but I will also suggest aspects that of humility fit within a Christian humanist framework, but that Aquinas does not mention or develop. At points I will speak of 'Christian humility' rather than 'Christian humanist humility,' and I do so when the aspect of humility under consideration is would be held by Christian humanists and hyper-Augustinians alike.

virtue particularly suited to ensuring a healthy self-esteem and to motivating a wider, more extensive sympathy over and against the sort of vicious comparisons that stand at the root of so many problems for human flourishing.

I. Humean and Christian Humanist Conceptions of Proper Self-Assessment

In order to explain just how a Christian humanist conception of Christian humility can better cope with some of the problems that the passion of pride can pose for flourishing and to bring out some of the larger issues at stake in Hume's secularization of ethics, I need to locate the key differences between Hume's and Aquinas's common stances regarding our proper self-assessments. I showed in Chapter Three that beneath the seemingly opposed terms that Hume and Aquinas use to designate various forms of self-assessments, they hold much in common regarding the importance of acquiring a stable, secure selfhood. In this section, however, I want to bring into focus the real differences between Hume and Aquinas's conceptions of pride and humility in order to show in *III.* the significance of Aquinas's conception of humility over and against Humean pride for addressing the problems for flourishing that I am considering. When we get clear on just where their differences reside, the more interesting and significant issues between Hume's and a Christian humanist's stance toward pride, humility, and human flourishing come to the fore.

The differences can be traced to their competing visions of the moral life, which themselves depend upon the answers that Christian humanists give to certain larger metaphysical questions, on the one hand, and upon Hume's attempt to avoid such questions in his moral reflections, on the other. At the heart of the Christian moral vision is the ideal of communion, with God and with one another—an ideal understood to be

partially realizable in this life and only fully realizable in the next. This moral and spiritual focus on love coincides with a Christian metaphysical account of God's very nature: the Godhead itself is understood to be a Trinity (a three-in-one unity of love between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and the two most momentous events in the Christian narrative, the Incarnation (God coming to dwell among us) and the Crucifixion (God's suffering with and for us, which is the culminating expression of the costliness and gift of such love), are seen as the ultimate revelations of divine love. Since Christian morality and spirituality centers on seeking to love and be like God, and since God is love, charity—i.e., friendship with God that extends to all others (even the most overlooked and despised)—is seen as the crowning virtue of the Christian life.[2] Correspondingly, the tradition is rich with imagery meant to point to the centrality of love, communion, and reconciliation. We can think of the injunction to regard the stranger as one's brother or neighbor, and of the image of the wedding banquet or of the lion lying down with the lamb.

By contrast, I think it can be said that Hume's moral vision does not point toward a single over-arching ideal or end. In fact, while we can speak of especially important virtues such as benevolence and justice as moral "ideals" to pursue, I suspect that Hume, in his wariness of utopianism and of over-theorization would resist the language of ideals altogether. Rather it seems as though Hume's moral vision consists in promoting the best sort of happiness that is possible for us in light of an honest appraisal of the way we are and the limits of what we can be. This corresponds to Hume's rejection of teleology and his descriptive project of giving an account of human nature as we observe it, not as we

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[2] See 1 John 4:7-8 (KJV): "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone who loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

think it should be. It can seem for Hume, then, that while he does assume a rough of hierarchy of values in his response to the sensible knave, there is no highest value or highest object of love to which he appeals that serves as an ultimate standard for ordering other goods. He is more inclined, I think, to let certain tensions in human life stand. We saw this tendency to admit tension surface in the way in which he promotes extensive sympathy but then also does not unambiguously rule out factors that oppose sympathy in his account of virtuous pride. In general Hume's moral vision rests more easily with human nature as we find it than does an ethic based upon a teleological conception of the cosmos and our place within it and which seeks to articulate human nature in its perfection.

There are two other related ways in which the Christian humanist's and the Humean's wider perspectives and subsequent moral visions differ and which lie behind their disagreements about what proper self-assessment involves. First, as I have mentioned in Chapter One, Christians regard the love of God to be the fulfillment of our nature; as Augustine says, "our hearts are restless, O Lord, until they rest in you" (C I.i.1, 3). We saw that Aquinas thought we could understand natural human flourishing apart from God, but Christians are united in affirming that, apart from God, we cannot *fully* understand the meaning and purpose of our lives. In other words, from a Christian perspective, God is not some add-on to an intact moral sphere, but is central to the whole Christian eudaimonistic framework. Hume, however, seems to conceive of God as irrelevant and superfluous to human fulfillment (and, indeed, he regards a Christian conception of God to be detrimental to human happiness).

Second, as we saw in the previous section, the Christian and Humean moral perspectives have different stances toward human worth. The Christian understands all persons to have fundamental value—being made and loved by God, and bearers of God's image. The dignity of every person persists, Christians believe, even among the most marginalized, deformed, and morally degenerate members of society, and it is a noteworthy component of Jesus's life that he sought out those who were most socially rejected and taught that we are to extend our love in such a way. By contrast, as we saw, Hume's ethic founded upon on a secular science of man does not and cannot appeal to some notion of basic human dignity. Instead Hume's framework only allows him to base worth upon empirically recognizable traits as would receive approbation from the general view—and these traits will always be comparatively ranked.

In the Introduction I sketched the general structure of what I call virtuous pride and virtuous humility (i.e., virtuous ways of being related to strengths and capacities, on the one hand, and our weaknesses, failings, and dependencies, on the other), and I explained how one's larger metaphysical commitments (or attempt to avoid them and remain in the "immanent" sphere, as in Hume's case) affect how virtuous pride and humility are conceived. I now want to examine how these underlying differences between a Christian humanist's and a Humean's perspective shape their respective stances towards the proper way of being related to our strengths and capacities, on the one hand, and our failings and weaknesses, on the other. Through this discussion, I also want to gesture towards what a secular account of virtuous humility might include.

First, as we saw in the Christian tradition, humility primarily refers to submission to God. This involves recognizing one's place in the cosmos (as Augustine put it in his

opening prayer, we are "a little piece of your creation" (C I.i.1) and that God, not

ourselves, is the highest object of love. It also includes showing proper reverence and

love for God, which in turn shapes our passions and actions. While Hume, by contrast,

will refer to the proper respect and deference due to authorities, teachers, and the like

(EPM VIII, 263-64, T 3.3.2.11, 382),[3] there is nothing that commands our ultimate

reverence and to which we must align our loves. Interestingly, *if* the judgments made

from the general view were strongly normative, Hume could have a sort of secular

analogue to humility as submission to God. As we saw, he often speaks as if the general

survey generates judgments that are normative for our passions and actions. Loosely

analogous to the way in which Augustine thinks that our loves need instruction, then,

Hume's account could suggest that our immediate desires and biased responses ought to

"submit" to those normative demands upon us. We saw this in his response to the

sensible knave: on Hume's view the knave should recognize that he ought to reverence

virtue and thereby shun his inclinations to injustice, and Hume regards him as base for

failing to do so. We are not genuinely obligated to pursue Humean virtue, however. The

moral "demands" upon us derive merely from sentiments we happen to be constituted to

have.

     In the Introduction I explained the structural relationship between virtuous pride

and virtuous humility: not only is virtuous humility needed to prevent pride from going

beyond its bounds (and hence becoming vicious, excessive pride) and vice versa, but also

the background picture that makes sense of what one understands to be the content of just

humility is bound up with the content of virtuous pride. This is apparent in the way in

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[3] It is worth nothing that on Hume's account respect is a mixture of the passions of love and humility (T 2.2.10.1, 251)

which Christian reverence for God and a Humean reverence for virtue (even if it is not

ultimately grounded) are connected, for both traditions, to the sources of proper self-

esteem. The Christian, for example, sees our relation to God to be a key source of our

dignity. That we are made in the image of God and moreover are loved by God requires,

Christian humanists think, a kind of self-love and affirmation of our worth—a proper

pride, if you will. In addition to this basic dignity, our moral dignity deepens as we

become more like God in the way we treat others. The grounds for proper self-

affirmation for the Christian are thus the same as those for proper humility: we find our

dignity (proper pride) in honoring that which is worthy of honor (i.e., God and that which

is of God) rather than placing our desires at the center of things (proper humility), and

conversely we demean ourselves (vicious humility) when we proudly overstep our

bounds (vicious pride).[4] Similarly for Hume, we build up our character, making our pride

just, by "submitting" to virtue, and we deserve the passion of humility, i.e., we diminish

our worth, if we disregard virtue by favoring of our untutored desires, as does the knave.[5]

Second, we saw in the Christian tradition that humility involves the proper

recognition and acceptance of our dependency, primarily on God, but Aquinas and

Augustine are also keen to point out our dependency on others (who are understood

ultimately as gifts of God).[6] Dependency on God takes several forms. Since all being is

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[4] Augustine explicitly links humility to exaltation and pride to our degradation. He says, "devout humility makes the mind subject to what is superior. Nothing is superior to God; and that is why humility exalts the mind by making it subject to God" (CG XIV.13, 572). He similarly says, "Now it is good to 'lift up your heart', and to exalt your thoughts, yet not in the self-worship of pride, but in the worship of God. This is a sign of obedience, and obedience can belong only to the humble" (CG XIV.13, 572).

[5] Interestingly, both Augustine and Hume hold that pursuit of virtue (though virtue is differently understood) begets inner peace (both a peaceful conscience and internal order) and that following our untutored passions begets internal conflict. See my discussion in Chapter One on this point in Augustine and Baier on this point in Hume (1991, 133).

[6] The notion of dependency understood more widely runs throughout Augustine's *Confessions*, for example. He begins by talking about his dependency on his mother's milk, acknowledging our physical

seen to derive from God, we are dependent on God for creating and sustaining our existence. Christians have also maintained that we are also dependent on God's grace in helping us grow in virtue, for endowing us with particular talents, and for providentially guiding our lives in various ways. As mentioned in Chapter One, while hyper-Augustinians tend to see God's grace as displacing human agency, Christian humanists such as Aquinas accept a cooperative model of divine and human agency. Thus, for Aquinas, humility does not entail giving God all the credit to the neglect of acknowledging our own role our achievements. Neither are we to attempt to parse out how much we contributed to our achievements so as to "own" them as our own possession and to measure how we stand in relation to others. Rather, humility involves an awareness of our deep indebtedness to God (and others and factors beyond our control) for the good that we have, and it disposes us joyfully to acknowledge the help we have received instead of to dwell on ourselves.[7]

From within Hume's immanent framework, proper recognition of our dependency obviously would not involve dependence on God, but it certainly could involve a sense of our dependence on others (and the natural world). Hume's account of justice points obviously to our physical interdependence, and his account of natural sympathy points to our dependence on others, as we have seen, for the formation of a healthy pride. Moreover, his framework is open to a more developed account of human dependency that could be used to develop a secular account of virtuous humility. It could, for example,

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need for nourishment and care, and continues by recalling the influence, both positive and negative, of his peers and teachers on his intellectual, moral, and religious formation. Likewise Aquinas says, "For every man needs, first, the Divine assistance, secondly, even human assistance, since man is naturally a social animal, for he is sufficient by himself to provide for his own life" (ST II-II:129.6.r1).

[7] We can infer that Aquinas does not think a constant, explicit sense of our dependency on God is needed at all times to have proper humility from his analogous discussion of why we do not have to think constantly of God to have perfect charity in this life (see ST II-II:24.8).

include MacIntyre's observations in *Dependent Rational Animals* that we enter the world in utter need, wholly relying on others for nourishment, for comfort and support, for the acquisition of language and the tools for reasoning, for being initiated into a moral and cultural form of life, and so on.[8] It could include a sense of our dependence upon our genetic endowments for the natural proclivities we have toward certain excellences and on luck in our circumstance for the ability to foster our talents. It could also include awareness of our dependence on the natural world for our continued biological sustenance and for the experiences of beauty and the sense of renewal it bestows.

Hume's framework therefore could allow that the proper attitude befitting the humble recognition of our dependency is appreciation and gratitude, a willingness to care for others in their dependency as we have (or should have) been cared for in ours, and an acceptance of our need for help, rather than a hardened resistance to be indebted to others.[9] (These facts of our dependency could be built into a Thomistic understanding of the content of virtuous humility as well. In this respect, there are fertile grounds for overlap between a Christian humanist and secular account of virtuous humility.) This recognition of dependency becomes vicious, however, if it obscures our sense of our real agency and the significant contribution we make to our own formation—aspects belonging to proper pride. Indeed, as MacIntyre observes, although our very capacity to become independent practical reasoners depends deeply on others, we remain in intellectual and moral immaturity if we fail adequately to take up our capacity to reason independently (see 1999, 81-98). Similarly, although we depend on others for our self-

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[8] MacIntyre does not discuss humility in his discussion of the virtues of acknowledged dependence (see 1999, 119-128), but it worthwhile to consider humility is central to them.

[9] The unwillingness to be indebted to others is a classic problem in Aristotle's account of the magnanimous person. In my view, this is one way in which Aquinas's Christianized account of magnanimity and its relation to humility is an improvement upon Aristotle.

assessments, we ought not indiscriminately to absorb others' judgments nor fail to trust our own insight into our character.[10] I suggest therefore that analogous to the cooperative model of grace and human agency, proper recognition of our dependency on others, luck, and the natural world would be accompanied by a right recognition and employment of our capacities and independence, without falsely downplaying our real contributions to our achievements. Just as Aquinas's account of humility does not require us to detangle how much of our accomplishments are of our own making and how much is due to God and others, so too could a secular acknowledgment of our dependencies involve a willingness to forgo the tendency to be overly possessive of what we have made of ourselves and, correspondingly, to see our accomplishments as grounds for looking down on others.[11]

Interestingly, however, although much could be said about virtuous ways of being related to our dependency from within Hume's secular framework, and although Hume is himself quite sensitive to our social dependency, his account of modesty—"a just sense of our weakness"—does not seem to include such awareness. Nor, as we saw, does his account of virtuous pride seem to exclude enjoying one's superiority to others, even though it would seem that such enjoyment would be subdued by an appropriate awareness of our indebtedness. Hume's failure to explicitly incorporate aspects of our

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[10] Hume suggests that, although we depend upon others for our own self-perceptions, we should not be overly dependent such that we fail to make our own best judgments of our character or that we give too much weight to the opinions of those of poor judgment (see T 2.1.11.11-12, 209). (Hume's actual language is that we *do* give greater weight to "the approbation of a wise man than with that of a fool" (T 2.1.11.12, 209). But this is not always true. If we do not recognize who the wise are or if we lack sufficient sympathy with wise persons, their judgments will matter less to us than they ought.) Nor should we be so independent from the perceptions of all others that we fail to be open to important critique (such self-protective invulnerability is a vicious form of pride). Such extreme independence that ends up being closed to others belongs, I suggest, to excessive rather than virtuous pride.

[11] We can think of a person who humbly and graciously receives an award for a great achievement. She does not glory in her success as her own but sees is as the work of many. Neither, though, does she give all the credit elsewhere; such false humility would fail to give due acknowledgment to her own hand in her accomplishment.

dependency into his account of virtuous pride is perhaps connected to his promotion of an ethic that by and large tries to work with and affirm our natural tendencies. Hume recognizes our deep propensity to pride—a pride which often arises upon being better than others—and his account of virtuous pride as a specifically natural virtue is one in which the natural pleasure we take in being superior is accepted, so long as it is properly concealed by modesty.

By contrast, for Aquinas, who embraces a Christian worldview wherein giving and receiving is connected to our ultimate telos of communion with God and others, an awareness of our dependency is integral to his account of magnanimity. While in Aristotle, the magnanimous person strives for self-sufficiency (since this is to attain greater likeness to the Unmoved Mover), in Aquinas the magnanimous person "deem[s] himself worthy of great things in consideration of the gifts he holds from God" (ST II-II:129.3.r4). Aquinas also maintains that it belongs to magnanimity to be confident in God's assistance (ST II-II:129.6.r1). Furthermore, Aquinas sees our strengths primarily as gifts we have been given for the good of others, not for self-aggrandizement.[12] Indeed, the Christian ideal of love encourages being outwardly focused. Proper self-affirmation does not rest with itself but turns towards God, others, and the common good.

It is worth noticing on this point that although Hume does indicate that the secure person with a healthy self-esteem is better attuned to others, his account of pride (whether excessive or just) is that of a passion that rests with ourselves rather than an attitude that directs us outward (see Chapter Four *I.c.*). Hume's secular framework, however, allows for the possibility of an account of virtuous pride that, by including an awareness of how

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[12] I am indebted to Mary Keys's discussion of this point (2003, 43). She draws from both the *Summa* (*ST*, I–II 19.10; 61.5; 66.4; II–II 58.12) and the *Commentary* (*lectio* x, 760, 779) in her discussion of this point.

others have contributed to our strengths (i.e., as a component of virtuous humility), would tend to soften our tendency to enjoy our superiority. Perhaps this recognition of our dependency could also encourage a practice of regarding our strengths primarily as gifts (in the sense that we rely upon many factors beyond ourselves for their development) to share with others, thus liberating the virtuously proud person from excessive attention on the self.

Third, Christian humility involves humility before others. This means, in the first instance, recognizing the dignity, the image of God, in all human beings—a dignity for which reverence, respect, and love is the proper response.[13] For the Christian, a person's fundamental worth is of more significance than talents and social status, and humility is a reverential mode of relating to others primarily not in a comparative way whereby we size up who is better than whom, but where we regard others, even those who are difficult to love, as important. Robert C. Robert convincingly argues that Jesus's teachings of humility in the Gospels suggests that humility does not mean denying one's attributes, but, rather, it involves not clinging to the social status that our strengths usually merit (2009, 128-29). Christian humility, he contends, involves relating to others fundamentally as persons of intrinsic value in other-directed love rather than having one's strengths and merits and social markers in view in a self-directed emphasis.

In the second instance, many Christians have thought, following St. Paul's injunction to "in humility count others more significant than yourself" (Phil. 2:3, ESV)

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[13] One might wonder whether this is best categorized as humility when one ought to recognize this same dignity in oneself. Why not better call it an appreciation of our fundamental equality? I think, however, that it is appropriate to include this attitude under humility because of the reverence it involves and also because our propensity to excessive pride (and thus to look down upon others) makes our ability to get beyond ourselves and affectively register another's dignity as more belonging to humility. I think that Aquinas is right to see humility as a restraining virtue, a virtue that restrains our tendency to excessive pride, and often humility is needed precisely to curb the sort of pride that would desensitize us to another's dignity.

that there is a sense in which it is right to regard all others as better than ourselves. As we

saw in Chapter One, Aquinas holds something of this view. He insists, however, that

humility before others in this sense does not mean that one deny when one has superior

abilities to another (see ST II-II:161.3). To do so would be false humility, and

additionally it would be harmful to the social body, for we need to acknowledge where

we have greater gifts than others in order to discern how to best offer our talents to the

common good (see ST II-II:132.1). Rather, Aquinas thinks that we cultivate a just

humility before others if we compare what we have of ourselves with what others have

from God (ST II-II:161.3.r2).[14] And if what another has from God is not apparent,

Aquinas proposes that through faith we ought to believe that God is at work inwardly in

the person, that she has goodness that we cannot see. While it is logically impossible that

all others can be better than all others, there is perhaps an important spirit towards others

that Aquinas means to capture, and which has practical significance in light of our

tendency to vicious forms of comparison. Aquinas's faith that God is at work in all

persons and that all persons can enrich us with their gifts, is a way of orienting ourselves

to others, of disposing us to look for and be receptive to others' strengths, rather than to

delight in our (apparent or real) superiority to those with less obvious talents. In light of

the problems of moral blindness and unjustified faction-inducing passion that arise from

our tendency to unjustified pride, we can see the moral value, I think, in encouraging

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[14] "We must not only revere God in Himself, but also that which is His in each one, although not with the same measure of reverence as we revere God. Wherefore we should subject ourselves with humility to all our neighbors for God's sake" (ST II-II:161.3.r1). See also: "If we set what our neighbor has of God's above that which we have of our own, we cannot incur falsehood [by having humility before all others]. Wherefore a gloss on Philip. Ii. 3, *Esteem others better than ourselves, says: We must not esteem by pretending to esteem; but we should in truth think it possible for another person to have something that is hidden to us and whereby he is better than we are, although our own good whereby we are apparently better than he, be not hidden*" (ST II-II:161.3.r2).

See also where Aquinas says, "Yet humility makes us honor others and esteem them better than ourselves, in so far as we see some of God's gifts in them" (ST II-II:129.3.r4).

attention to others and a disposition to acknowledge and take joy in their gifts.[15] Indeed,

such generous attunement to others takes moral strength and is very different from a

servile, self-mistrusting way of tending to regard others as better than ourselves.

In a Humean framework, however, to what extent does it make sense to articulate

a humility before others that goes beyond the appropriateness of respect for obvious

superiors? I have already argued in *II.* of Chapter Five that given Hume's empirical

project of providing a science of man, he cannot appeal to an underlying metaphysical

grounding for human dignity, but can only point to empirically recognizable traits that

warrant esteem.[16] While Humeans may attempt to defend an account of what, from the

general view, is worthy of respect in human nature itself (e.g., our capacity to reason, our

capacity for benevolence, etc.), there are philosophical and practical problems with this

route. As we saw the general view is insufficient for establishing the strongly evaluative

notion of dignity. Additionally, it could seem that the very failure to actualize those

capacities better warrants contempt rather than respect for those persons. Perhaps,

however, somewhat analogous to Aquinas's conviction that God is at work in others and

has given others gifts even if we cannot see them, a secular outlook could similarly affirm

the inadequacy of our epistemic position with respect to others, one that acknowledges

that there is always more to people than we can readily see and that every person likely

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[15] Father Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov* recommends that we take a similar spirit of humility before others, seeing ourselves as "guilty before everyone" (298)." If another has a vice that repulses us and tempts us to elevate ourselves in relation to him, Zosima suggests that we think that the ripple effect of sin is such that maybe if we had acted differently on a certain occasion, that person might not struggle as they do (320-22). This attitude checks our tendency to feel superior to others for their failings by way of vicious comparison, and it helps us to speculatively sympathize with the way in which others' vices are often set in motion by mistreatment from others, while simultaneously acknowledging that we have mistreated others ourselves.

[16] Hume is unclear on the following crucial questions: Is, and if so, to what extent is some notion of human dignity assumed by the sort of extensive sympathy needed for the general view? Must human dignity be acknowledged from the general view itself? Does Hume's account of the general view require extending our sympathy to all others? On what grounds could it do so? Moreover, how deep must this sympathy go?

has something important to offer, even if it is not apparent to us. Hume does not develop an account of humility before others along these lines, however. Once again, his discussions of proper self-assessments sit more easily with the competitiveness and comparisons that pervade social life and are used to measure social status.

This becomes even more apparent if we look at Hume's discussions of modesty. In Chapter Three I emphasized Hume's initial description of modesty as a "just sense of our weakness" (T 3.3.2.1, 378), and I highlighted ways in which Hume suggests that it is related to being open to others.[17] In fact, however, most of Hume's account of modesty suggests that it is merely an outward social grace, useful for easing social relations by preventing the offense that an open display of pride could evoke in others; and as important as this social grace is,[18] it hardly denotes a genuine reverence towards others.[19]

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[17] We get this sense when he says that modesty's "most usual meaning is when it is opposed to *impudence* and *arrogance*, and expresses a diffidence of our own judgment, and a due attention and regard for others. In young men chiefly, this is a sure sign of good sense; and is also the certain means of augmenting that endowment, by preserving their ears open to instruction, and making them still grasp after new attainments" (EPM VIII, 263).

[18] Modesty in this sense goes some way in mitigating the problems that desire for pride can pose for flourishing. The modest person is less likely to make *others* feel insecure, and thus softens the tendency in those others to compare rather than sympathize with her, feel inadequate themselves, or to feel envy, hatred, anger, and so on because of the insecurity she elicits in them.

[19] Hume says,

good-breeding and decency require that we shou'd avoid all signs and expressions, which tend directly to show that passion. We have, all of us, a wonderful partiality for ourselves, and were we always to give vent to our sentiments in this particular, we shou'd mutually cause the greatest indignation in each other,…by the immediate presence of so disagreeable a subject of comparison… [so] we establish the *rules of good-breeding*, in order to prevent the opposition of men's pride, and render conversation agreeable and inoffensive. (T 3.3.2.10, 381)

Modesty, Hume says, is this rule of good-breeding, which opposes pride or arrogance (T 3.3.2.9-10, 381 and EPM VIII, 263). How does modesty contribute to our own happiness? Hume says that others are more apt to indulge our "secret sentiments" of pride if we "carry a fair outside, and have the appearance of modesty and mutual deference in all our conduct and behavior" (T 3.3.2.10, 381-2). Even directly after he talks about the importance of students modestly listening to their teachers (a passage I just quoted in the previous footnote), he says that modesty "has a further charm to every spectator; by flattering every man's vanity, and presenting the *appearance* of a docile pupil, who receives, with proper attention and respect, every word they utter" (EPM VIII, 263-64, emphasis mine). (In this case, Hume is explicit about the way in which modesty feeds the vanity of others (and he does not seem to suggest that this vanity is harmful to the person who harbors it).) And as with his account of modesty in the *Treatise*, Hume's account in the second *Enquiry* thereafter turns to a more lengthy discussion of modesty as a mostly outward manner that eases social relations.

It seems in fact that, for Hume, modesty has more to do with pride than having a "just sense of our weakness," for modesty serves to conceal our strengths from too public a display. As Hume says, no careful observer of human nature will assert that this form of good-breeding and decency require us to "[go] beyond the outside, or that a thorough sincerity in this particular is esteem'd a real part of our duty" (T 3.3.2.11, 382).[20] As such, Humean modesty appears to be compatible with enjoying one's superiority to others and even with contempt.

A fourth aspect of virtuous humility in the Christian tradition is a right recognition and remorse for one's moral failings (which, in a Christian worldview is understood as sin) and acceptance of one's limitations and weaknesses. The Christian vision of communion again lies at the heart of seeing humility, in this respect as well, to be significant. On the Christian view, sin is so problematic because it disrupts our relationship to God and divides us from one another. Awareness of one's moral failings is thus important because it is the precondition for seeking reconciliation and moral transformation. Furthermore, such awareness disposes us to bear with the moral weaknesses of others, recognizing that others have borne with ours. In contrast to what I argued to be the over-emphasis on sin in the hyper-Augustinian tradition, a Christian humanist conception of the value of recognizing one's failings and limitations would be accompanied by due sense of one's significance, therefore avoiding self-deprecation.

Once more Hume's framework allows for a secular analogue here. While a "just sense of our weakness" would not involve the notion of sin before God, it could certainly include a sense of our moral failings and their effects, as well as acceptance of our

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[20] By contrast, Aquinas maintains that "humility resides chiefly inwardly in the soul." He says that a person can bear reverence to another without outwardly subjecting oneself to another when doing so would be detrimental to that other's welfare; outward acts of humility require moderation (ST II-II:161.3.r3).

limitations and weaknesses. Like a Christian awareness of sin, this would better make

possible moral growth, reconciliation, and sensitivity to the struggles and of others.

Again, though, Hume does not mention awareness of our moral failings in his account of

modesty and seems not to have seen it as especially important insofar as it does not show

up in his discussion of the virtues. Perhaps Hume's silence on this point is in part a

reaction to the over-emphasis on sin in the Scottish Calvinist tradition in which he was

raised.[21] Perhaps it is also because Hume's more worldly moral vision regards a wider-

range of passions and actions as morally acceptable. In any case, there is nothing in

Hume's secular framework that prevents him from defending this aspect of humility or

modesty as virtuous, and given our tendency to vicious forms of pride that fails to see our

own excess, this practice would be important for the cultivation of proper pride.

In sum, then, although both Aquinas and Hume affirm the value of self-esteem

and condemn small-mindedness, there are significant differences that remain with respect

to the content of these attitudes, which are rooted in their respective religious and secular

outlooks. Aquinas emphasizes dependency and other-centered orientation even in his

account of magnanimity, while Hume seems to see enjoyment of one's superiority to be a

natural and acceptable component of virtuous pride, and even his account of modesty

seems to lack inward awareness of our debts to others. While I have argued that any

conception of virtuous self-assessment will include proper recognition of and ways of

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[21] I have argued in previous chapters that hyper-Augustinian humility problematically over-estimates human sinfulness insofar as it wrongly interprets many efforts toward the good as ultimately motivated by selfishness or pride. I have also argued that the hyper-Augustinian emphasis on sin in its account of humility places too much focus on the self rather than in orienting one's focus outwardly. Hume perhaps can be read as offering a subtle critique of this over-emphasis on sin when, in his account of the passion of malice, he discusses the phenomena of self-malice. Hume says, "a person may extend this malice against himself, even to his present fortune, and carry it so far as designedly to seek affliction, and encrease his pains and sorrows" as we see "with those penances which men inflict on themselves for their past sins and failings" (T 2.2.8.11, 242-43). We should note, too, that Hume later lists penance as a monkish virtue in both the second *Enquiry* and the *Natural History* (EPM VIII, 270; NHR X, 163).

being related to our strengths and weaknesses, capacities and dependencies, our worth and relative smallness, etc., it is not insignificant the Christian tradition emphasizes humility and Hume pride.

I have not only pointed out, though, that key differences between a Christian humanist and Humean outlook informs different conceptions of the content of virtuous pride and humility, but also that a broadly Humean framework itself can support different ways of filling out what is involved in proper stances towards ourselves in relation to others. This is due, I think in part, to the various principles in human nature and the way in which Hume's non-teleological perspective does not and ultimately cannot explain why certain principles (such as sympathy, when extended) ought always to be privileged over others (such as comparisons, when vicious). The tensions in human nature leave much room for debate about the extent to which we should subdue, refine, or favor certain principles so as to best flourish in light of the kinds of beings that we are. I have hinted at the possibility of a secular account of humility that is more analogous to a Christian humanist one than is Hume's account of modesty, and I will later say more about the importance of developing a secular humility along these lines.[22] For the remainder of this chapter, however, I want simply to look at the extent to which a Christian humanist eudaimonist moral framework (such as Aquinas's) and the account of virtuous humility it supports is able to address the problems for flourishing that arise from our desire for the passion of pride.

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[22] Even though a secular framework allows for articulating the good of humility on naturalistic grounds, humility has been particularly neglected in secular moral philosophy. I think this is in part because a religious worldview and its appeals to a transcendent moral source perhaps better dispose one to dwell upon one's dependency.

II. Normativity, Moral Ontology, and Motivation

Before I look specifically at Christian humility in relation to the problems for flourishing posed by pride, I need to show more generally how Aquinas's Christian humanist ethical framework can provide a satisfying philosophical account of moral motivation. Aquinas, building upon both Aristotle and Augustine, embraces a teleological conception of the cosmos and of the human person as oriented by our nature to God and explicitly endorses a eudaimonistic account of ethics, whereby goodness is understood as that which contributes to the fulfillment of our nature and, correspondingly, to the genuine happiness of well-being in the good person. In this section I want to show how Aquinas's teleological perspective, which is itself supported by certain answers to the sorts of larger metaphysical questions that Hume seeks to do without, is able to ground an account of strong normativity and to provide a background moral ontology that is motivationally significant.[23]

As I mention in *I.a.*, most moral theorists writing before Hume, to greater or lesser degrees, appeal to a conception of some transcendent moral source or some larger metaphysical account of the cosmos in order to substantiate moral claims such as why certain features of our nature point to what is noblest and best about us, why we are obligated to pursue virtue, and what would motivate us to do so. I want to look first at the metaphysical background picture that supports Aquinas's account of natural law and the natural virtues and then to look at how his Christian commitments enrich his conception

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[23] I primarily discuss Aquinas here because he is explicitly a eudaimonist (and because he represents the Christian humanist tradition). I think, however, that all religious outlooks tend to be implicitly eudaimonistic in the sense that they assume that the moral and spiritual life (as they understand it) is constitutive of a higher, more fulfilling way of being. Moreover, all religious traditions rely upon a moral ontology, provided by answers to the larger metaphysical questions that Hume avoids in his secular account of ethics, in order to make sense of why that way of life is higher and more fulfilling.

of moral ontology and normativity. In Chapter Two we discussed Hume's objections to both natural and revealed religion, and by observing the role that both play in Aquinas's moral philosophy, I aim to show the significance of precisely that which Hume wants to make irrelevant to ethics.

In many ways Aquinas's account of natural virtue is similar to Hume's moral philosophy. Both give an account of natural human flourishing of sorts. Hume's account of virtue, as those traits that we regard to be useful and agreeable when taking an impartial view, points to a picture of human happiness and well-being. Similarly, Aquinas understands natural virtue as those traits that are constitutive of our living and doing well as rational and social animals. Both, moreover, think that we arrive at these moral judgments by rationally reflecting upon our sentiments. For Hume, we take up the impartial perspective of the general view towards the way in which our passions operate in order to identify what traits are useful and agreeable to human beings as such, and for Aquinas, we rationally reflect upon our natural inclinations, which direct us to our natural well-being. Furthermore, for both, all humans, regardless of their larger metaphysical commitments, in principle have the capacity for arriving at correct moral judgments pertaining to natural human flourishing because reason and emotion provides us with the relevant information needed to comprehend the good. Finally, both appeal to an account of human nature to make sense of their claims. For Hume, the natural operation of the passions that we find when we observe human beings are rooted in human nature, as are the natural inclinations that form the basis of Aquinas's account of natural virtue and natural law.

While there is indeed important overlap in Aquinas's and Hume's approach, their conceptions of human nature are importantly different and therefore differently shape the sorts of philosophical explanations that they can give to questions of normativity. Hume's conception of human nature is non-normative, non-teleological; it denotes what we can say upon strictly observing what is usually and for the most part the case. And as we saw, on Hume's purely descriptive, non-teleological account of nature, he is able to explain how and why we have arrived at a common language of praise and blame and hence why we have specifically moral concepts at all, but he cannot explain why what we take to be morally obligating actually *is* binding for us. Furthermore, he is not fully able to explain why we ought to privilege certain features of human nature over others (e.g., sympathy over the principle of comparison), nor in how far we should go in doing so (e.g., how far we should extend our sympathy). Aquinas's account of natural virtue, by contrast, depends upon holding a teleological view of the cosmos supported by certain answers to the larger metaphysical questions that Hume thought we should avoid. As I showed in section *I.* of Chapter Five, a teleological view of the human person situated in a teleological conception of the cosmos is metaphysically able to support a conception of human nature in its perfection and is thus able to ground a eudaimonist ethic that maintains the objectivity of the good and the strongly normative demands it makes upon us.

A eudaimonist ethic situated in teleological conception of the cosmos is also, in contrast to Hume's non-teleological, descriptive approach, able to provide a philosophical account of moral motivation. A teleological eudaimonistic ethics maintains the following: 1) human nature is oriented towards its telos/perfection, 2) we genuinely flourish to the

extent to which we realize our telos, 3) the virtues are those character traits that are constitutive of flourishing, and, 4) we attain eudaimonia (the happiness of well-being) through the virtues. Thus, if the cosmos really is teleologically ordered and if we are in fact really oriented toward certain ends, we should be motivated to pursue virtue because we will attain the happiness of eudaimonia and nobility of soul only through the life of virtue; the immediate pleasure gained through vice cannot deliver true happiness. Certainly, in order for the claims of a eudiamonistic perspective to be practically motivating for us as such, we need to conceive of reality in this way. (Indeed, many traditional eudaimonists, such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas, take great pains to argue for their metaphysical conclusions, and they also seek to convince us that the life of amusement, luxury, and status is not the route to genuine fulfillment.) Regardless of whether we fail to be philosophically and existentially convinced of their conclusions, however, it is significant that a teleological eudaimonistic framework is able to give a philosophical account for moral motivation that, unlike Hume's, goes beyond mere expedience and explains why we should be concerned to pursue virtue as such.

Hume thought that we do not have sufficient basis in reason for believing in a teleologically ordered world. In particular, we saw in Chapter Two that Hume rejected the arguments typically employed by Deists for concluding that the world was created and maintained by a providentially wise and good deity, a view that could serve as the basis for understanding the cosmos as teleologically ordered,[24] and, accordingly, for grounding a eudaimonist virtue ethic (as it was for Aquinas). I suggested, however, that Hume prematurely closes the possibility of the reasonableness of certain conclusions of

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[24] Alasdair MacIntyre remarks that "the only type of teleologically universe in which we have good reason to believe is a theistic universe" (1998, 152). Thomas Nagel, however, has argued for the possibility of a non-theist teleological view (2012).

natural religion, even if he is right to maintain that reason cannot get us certainty in these matters. I want to maintain, moreover, that Hume was wrong to indicate that nothing of great importance for ethics is lost with his attempt to do away with a transcendent moral source and the teleological cosmic picture such a source usually provides. As I have shown, both strong normativity and a philosophical account of moral motivation are lost, the latter of which I have still to argue makes a practical difference.

I showed in Chapter Two that Hume did seem to suggest that natural religion, though he did not think it necessary for morality, could be morally helpful. He thought that revealed religion (and Christianity was his chief concern), however, was not only more epistemologically problematic than natural religion (indeed, he usually represents revealed religion as positively opposed to reason and experience), but he also thought that revealed religion is often morally destructive. I explained particularly how Hume's reversal and redefinition of pride and humility was meant to counter what he saw to be the corrupting effects of Christian morality's long-standing condemnation of the former and exaltation of the latter. Ironically, however, I want to show that it is the revelation-dependent, distinctively Christian components of Aquinas's moral vision (and the way it shapes his account of humility) that in certain respects has better resources for promoting the individual and social human flourishing than does Hume's own secular vision.

When Aquinas's broadly Aristotlean teleological account of natural human flourishing (a teleology that could be supported by natural religion) gains further dimension by incorporating a specifically Christian conception of reality into its account of the virtues, the account of moral motivation becomes: human beings are by nature directed towards knowing and loving God (who is understood to be a personal God who

invites us into friendship with himself) and by extension, knowing and loving what God has made, especially other persons; we fulfill what is noblest and best about ourselves through the life of charity (which is facilitated by humility); this simultaneously is constitutive of genuine happiness.[25] By this account, we should be motivated to pursue virtue (both natural and theological virtues) because doing so leads to the happy fulfillment of our nature. With respect to the issues I am concerned with here, we should be motivated to seek a more extensive sympathy instead of bolstering our pride with vicious comparisons because, given the kinds of beings that we are and the ultimate end towards which we are oriented, true fulfillment is found through widening our love.

So in contrast to Hume's moral philosophy, Aquinas's teleological, eudaimonistic account of ethics is able to provide a philosophical account of strong normativity and moral motivation. I now want to look at ways in which Aquinas's account can make a practical difference. In section *I.* of Chapter Five, I argued that although Hume cannot give an account of strong normativity and ultimately cannot explain why it should be a matter of pride to pursue virtue, accepting his secular moral philosophy might not drastically alter our moral practice so long as we regard the qualities that are useful and agreeable to ourselves and others under the aspect of strong evaluation. I also said, however, that the lack of strong normativity can, nevertheless, subtly undermine moral formation or cannot carry as far as other moral perspectives might. I want to unpack this more fully here. I suggest that there are several ways in which a Christian humanist eudaimonstic ethic can be motivationally significant in a way that Hume's metaphysically quiet ethic cannot. In what remains of this section I will discuss the difference that a Christian metaphysic can make for moral motivation more generally and

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[25] Natural virtue also yields genuine, but imperfect happiness for Aquinas.

then, in *III.*, look briefly at the motivational power that Aquinas's Christian moral vision and account of humility has for dealing with the problems that pride poses for social and individual flourishing.

I want to begin by returning to Hume's claim that his (secular and non-teleological) sentimentalist commitments will have "little or no influence on practice" (T 3.1.1.26, 301-2). He maintains that just as secondary qualities of colors, temperature, and sound matter to us as much as they did before modern philosophy discovered that they are perceptions in the mind rather than qualities in objects, so too, "[n]othing can be more real, or concern us more, than our own sentiments of pleasure and uneasiness; and if these be favourable to virtue, and unfavourable to vice, no more can be requisite to the regulation of our conduct and behavior" (T 3.1.1.26, 302). Hume thus seems to think that our sentiments will remain wholly unchanged by seeing morality in this new, subjective light. I take him to hold that, like the way we experience other secondary qualities (e.g., color, temperature, and sound), the operation of the passions and what we praise and blame is rooted in our nature and that our passions (and the actions that flow from them) will therefore be unaffected by our realization that our sense of morality "lies in [ourselves], not in the object" (T 3.1.1.26, 301) as we previously thought. Hume's proposal seems to be that no account of strong normativity is needed because we care about virtue no less without it. Indeed, it would be hard to imagine that, for example, our love for our children, an affection that springs from our nature, would be diminished were we to lose the sense that there exists some strong normativity to care for them. Similarly, given our natural constitution, it is certainly plausible that we will continue to care about

benevolence, justice, generosity, and so on, whether or not we believe there to be a moral ontology backing them.

It is this conviction, I think, that explains why Hume sees morality that is informed by revealed religion as largely being either corrupting or superfluous. On his view, the "natural and usual force of the passions" from which are moral judgments are derived will continue to operate in the way that they do regardless of whether we accept a larger metaphysical picture that lends support to the moral sense our nature already bestows us with. If, then, a religious conception of reality does have an effect on our passions that is different than our natural responses would otherwise be, then it must be corrupting, making our lives artificial. If, on the other hand, a religious conception of reality affirms what we, due to our human nature, would affirm regardless of holding that religious view, then it is redundant. For Hume it seems that doing away with the metaphysical background that could ground strong normativity would be an improvement, for it pulls the rug out from all the religiously contrived counterfeit virtues that occlude human happiness while leaving genuine virtue in tact.

Hume's view, however, that the loss of a metaphysical picture that grounds and makes sense of our moral judgments will have no negative practical impact on our passions and actions is, I think, false. It does, indeed, seem that because many of our moral convictions are rooted in human nature, we will not stop caring about those traits we regard as virtues, even if we see that they lack the strong normativity or categorical character that we, in our pre-philosophical moral experience, take them to have. Nevertheless, lacking a moral ontology that can adequately ground our moral judgments forces us to view the content of these judgments differently, and this changes the nature

of the sentiment-laden experience of those values in a way that is disanalogous to secondary qualities. While it does alter how we think about the color red to know that redness is not in the red object but only in our subjective experience of it, our experience of red itself is unchanged by this knowledge. By contrast, the very experience of values themselves is modified when we see them as our own projections (and hence as more sophisticated weak evaluations) rather than as making genuine demands upon us. This is in part because our experience of secondary qualities such as color, temperature, sound, and so on is causally produced in us, and will thus continue to occur in the same way, regardless of what we think about its nature; passions, however, depend upon concepts in order to arise.[26] We experience emotions (especially the moral sentiments of approval and disapproval) for *reasons*; they necessarily rely upon the understanding. We are sad at our friend's loss, delighted by the stranger's kindness, proud of our garden. And if our view of that towards which we feel changes, our feeling changes along with it. If, for instance, we come to see the stranger's unexpected "kindness" as a ploy to lure people into an advertising scam, our delight will turn to anger. If comparison with other gardens

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[26] Hume hits upon this difference when he divides impressions into those of sensation and those of reflection. All the traditionally mentioned secondary qualities are delivered to us by way of sensation, but as Hume notes, "passions, desires, and emotions…arise mostly from ideas" (T 1.1.2.1, 11). Of course there are exceptions and complexities that Hume does not discuss, such as moods, drives, appetites, or impulses that are affective but may not depend upon "ideas" in order to arise. Moods, for example, may be causally triggered by, say, a poor night of sleep or the endorphins released by a good run; in turn, they underlie and color the emotions that arise upon ideas (e.g., when a person's exhaustion puts him in a sour mood, which in turn causally disposes him to feel anger that his toddler is being uncooperative). But moods can also be triggered by ideas (e.g., when a person is elated by good news and thus becomes disposed to notice and responds with joy toward the good things in one's life). Likewise, appetite (a kind of desire) can arise due to blind causality (e.g., when one's empty stomach causes her to desire food), but it can also be set in motion by an idea (e.g., when passing a bakery evokes the desire for cake). I focus here on those aspects of our affective lives that are intentional in the Husserlian sense—that depend upon concepts for their existence. (Husserl's student Edith Stein offers a very interesting analysis of the interrelation of causal and intentional sources for our affective lives, both within the individual and the community, in *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* (see especially pp. 39-115, 133-96)

puts our garden into perspective, our pride will be less strongly felt.[27] How we conceive

of the moral life also affects our sentiments, which in turn can impact moral practice.

The way in which we can see the effects of our understanding on our morally

relevant sentiments becomes evident when we look at the gap between our biased

passions and the passions we ought to feel (as ascertained when taking the general view).

(I will call those sentiments that would be affirmed by the general view as expressing

virtue as 'moral sentiments.') While, indeed, we are not likely to love or care for our

children any less upon thinking that we have no genuine obligation to do so, it is less

clear that crucial changes in how we conceive of the moral life will not effect the place

given to our natural tendencies and sentiments that can conflict with the dictates of the

general view (e.g., our tendencies to revenge, vicious comparisons, bias, etc.). Moreover,

the character and strength of those moral sentiments that we continue to feel can also

undergo subtle modification.

The first kind of alteration of sentiment I want to explore pertains to the ways our

passions might be affected by coming to think, as Hume's account entails, that there is no

genuinely strong normativity. One rare but possible response to this could be to embrace

nihilism, to celebrate the freedom from any genuine moral obligation. At the extreme,

this view could undergird actions that require us to radically blunt our natural sympathy

(or which, due to some neurological abnormality, is blunted already). We can think of the

nihilist Smerdyakov who murders his father in the *Brothers Karamazov*. Another, more

common, response is to feel despair or at least unease upon accepting the view that the

values that give our life meaning have no objective correlate. Nietzsche was, of course,

acutely sensitive to the possibility that a malaise and sense of meaninglessness threatens

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[27] See T 2.3.3.7 for a brief discussion of how passions change as our understanding changes.

to follow the collapse of a religious worldview, and with it an objective grounding for morality.[28] The erosion of a moral ontology that could support our strong evaluations has long been seen as a problem—what Weber famously called the problem of disenchantment—for such removal can be deflating, giving our moral judgments a certain hollow ring. Ivan Karamazov represents this sort of moral despair. Like Smerdyakov, he thinks that atheism entails that "everything is permitted," but he finds anguish rather than liberation in this view.

I have been speaking of the possible shape of our emotional response to the meta-ethical implications of Hume's moral philosophy. Thus far these possible responses—liberation, despair, or unease—are second-order sentiments; they are sentiments about our first-order moral responses. I want to focus on how our second-order sentiments about the nature of morality could impact our first-order moral responses, for if the latter remain relatively unchanged, then Hume would be right that his view would likely have little or no effect on practice, aside from the positive one of correcting for the corrupting influence of revealed religion.[29] With Hume, I think that a range of moral sentiments would persist insofar as they arise from human nature. However, I also maintain that our moral formations can differ quite markedly depending upon whether we attend to or ignore our moral sentiments, whether we seek to justify biased emotions, and how the moral sentiments are understood in light of the background metaphysical pictures that

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[28] Nietzsche's response to the threat of nihilistic despair was of course to affirm the fact that we create our own values and are radically free to shape our own lives through the striving of self-overcoming. But it is an open question whether despair over nihilism is the more honest response. We might feel that that to affirm with Nietzsche the brute suffering and evil requires us to dampen something of our moral sensitivity. Ivan Karamazov saw the threat of nihilism and to my mind it points to a nobility of character that he was not able to take joy in a world in which "everything is permitted."

[29] Even a nihilist would have no apparent motivations for going against the moral conventions if his or her passions of "pleasure and uneasiness… be favourable to virtue, and unfavourable to vice" (T 3.1.1.26, 302) as Hume cpontends that they will be for most people.

inform them.[30] We cannot weed out our natural sympathy, for example, but we can weaken it by habitually turning our attention away from our sympathetic responses or we can extend it by actively considering another's position. I thus want to look at how removing the grounds for strong normativity can affect our emotional formation in these ways.

With respect to those who would rejoice in liberation from the strictures of morality there may be a more active intent to ignore our moral sentiments when they conflict with self-interest or a competing conception of the noble. The way in which Smerdyakov was disrespected as a child (Grigory who raised him would say to him, "You think you're a human being, you were begotten of bathhouse slime, that's who you are…" (124)) already fed his natural human tendency to resent those who harm us and to desire revenge, and it deprived him of the sort of environment that would encourage him to practice and cultivate a wider sympathy. Smerdyakov's poor emotional formation disposed him to accept with pleasure Ivan's argument that "if God does not exist, everything is permitted," and he, being an atheist himself, used this view to legitimate his act of murder. Furthermore, it enabled him to regard having a sense of moral obligation as a sign of "weakness" and of failing to see things clearly; correspondingly, he saw himself as special and uniquely strong (i.e., as in a sense noble) for being able to carry out a deed that most could not countenance. While Smerdyakov, who was a sociopath of sorts,[31] arguably would have the capacity to act in abominable ways regardless of his

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[30] Hume does affirm that custom and culture play an important role in refining our moral and aesthetic judgments (see "A Standard of Taste"), and of course he does discuss how a religious worldview can negatively shape our emotional responses. He does not, however, examine how a conceptual shift to the secular could impact our passions.

[31] Smerdyakov had shown sociopathic tendencies from a young age, doing things like hanging cats and giving them religious burials. While nihilism can give credence to these tendencies, it is both unlikely

views, his nihilistic outlook played a role in his motivational psychology, serving to justify his heinous crime in his mind in a way that an outlook that would stand in deep tension with Smerdyakov's behavior would not. The sociopath, however, is not my primary concern.

My central concern is the shift in emotional formation that may occur among those who come to accept a Humean meta-ethical position and who either find it disquieting or are unperturbed, believing with Hume that it will make no practical difference. In these cases, the lack of belief in strong normativity can diminish the strength of moral feeling or foster a relaxation of moral effort. Particularly when we are tempted to entertain and to act upon those sentiments that stand in tension with moral ones, it can make a difference whether or not we think that certain feelings and actions are categorically wrong and vicious. We tend to try to see ourselves on the side of the good and therefore, when we want to act upon morally questionable desires, we often seek to justify them, to give ourselves reasons as to why doing so is permissible. Losing the sources that could be used to articulate why certain useful and agreeable traits are moral requirements makes it easier to rationalize more vicious ways of behaving.

We saw that a Christian humanist conception of the world (and indeed a teleological conception of the world in general) can make sense of strong normativity, and so, if it can be believed, it can avoid these problems. Many people, however, do not notice the lack of grounds for their deepest moral intuitions. We can think, for example, of those who hold together a reductively scientific, materialist conception of the world

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that the sociopath would be kept in check by a worldview that could support an account of strong normativity or that nihilism would itself cause a normal person to be sociopathic.

and a notion of equal human dignity that such a view is incapable of supporting.[32] Would Hume's secular moral philosophy in any way diminish the moral seriousness of those who do not realize that their secular moral perspective cannot support their moral convictions in the strong evaluative manner in which they are experienced? In other words, would Christian humanism be any better able to inspire virtue than Hume's secular perspective for those people who would continue to believe that virtue is strongly normative for us upon accepting Hume's account of morality? I think it would. Christian humanism adds to a secular view not only an account of strong normativity but also a specific way of conceiving of reality, wherein all that exists is in a sense sacred, wherein persons are made for communion, and so on. This specifically Christian conception of reality can encourage moral sentiments in several ways.

One way in which a Christian humanist conception of reality can foster and nourish our moral sentiments is by honing our moral attention. The most obvious and general way it does so pertains to the inherent seriousness and centrality it gives to the moral life, for it is inseparable from fulfilling our teleological end of charity. Christians are therefore encouraged by their own worldview to reflect regularly upon their characters and to seek to grow in goodness. This general orientation is further supported by religious communities and practices which are meant in part to draw our attention to

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[32] See Peter Singer's critique of the notion of special human dignity:
> The traditional ethic is still defended by bishops and conservative bioethicists who speak in reverent tones about the intrinsic value of all human life, irrespective of its nature or quality. But, like the new clothes worn by the emperor, these solemn phrases seem true and substantial only while we are intimidated into uncritically accepting that all human life has some special dignity or worth. Once challenged, the traditional ethic crumples. Weakened by the decline in religious authority and the rise of a better understanding of the origins and nature of our species, that ethic is now being brought undone by changes in medical technology with which its inflexible strictures simply cannot cope. (1994, 4)

For those who hold that the concept of human dignity is important but reject the metaphysic that gave expression to this notion, the burden is to explain how such dignity can be grounded.

the core aspects of the moral life (e.g., love of neighbor) and to do so communally such that we can help one another to become better. Additionally, the specific content of the Christian vision can direct our attention in ways that aid moral formation. For example, seeing others as bearers of God's image disposes us to be attentive to their needs, receptive to their gifts, and more inclined to notice persons we might have otherwise overlooked.

The way in which Christianity informs our conception of reality not only encourages moral attention but it also can shape the emotions themselves and their content in morally helpful ways. Emotions, as responses to ideas (i.e., impressions of reflection), are affected by how we conceive of the world. The emotional content that serves as a fitting response to (and is arguably in part constitutive of) believing others to be made and loved by God and intrinsically valuable requires a depth and strength of affirmation that seeing others as nothing more than remarkably complex organisms does not. Otherwise stated, to believe that others are sacred demands emotional responses that are in keeping with this belief; whereas believing that others are value-neutral material beings is compatible with scorn for those who bear characteristics that one sees as offensive, unimpressive, etc. The Christian conception of the world essentially demands love and reverence as a response to its real worth. A secular perspective does not exclude this sort of response, but it does not require it and in fact allows for other opposing responses.

The kind and quality of our affective responses towards the world in turn shape our moral practice, for good or for ill. We can think of Gaita's experience at the psychiatric ward. There some of his colleagues did not conceive of the patients as

valuable nor feel them to be so—quite the contrary. By contrast, the nun conceived of

and affectively responded to the patients as equal in their humanity and worthy of love.

(And for Gaita, the nun's love had the power to reveal to him their real worth

(1998,19).[33]) Gaita does not think that the nun's religious worldview was necessary for

regarding the patients as full equals and loving them as such, but he does affirm that her

religious commitments and vocational practice that they inspired formed her in such a

way to be capable of this sort of love (1998, 20).[34] More generally it can be said that a

Christian humanist perspective should point one to a wider love, if one earnestly seeks to

be affectively shaped by the vision of reality it puts forward, but a secular perspective

such as Hume's does not have the conceptual tools for encouraging this sort of affective

formation to the same degree. A Humean could certainly seek to develop a love that

recognizes that dignity and common humanity of the most deformed and socially rejected

among us, but it would involve personal initiative over and above what the perspective

demands.

Not only can a Christian humanist worldview foster greater attentiveness to others

and encourage us to affectively respond to them as beings worthy of love; it can also

empower us to go morally further than we otherwise would. We can think, for example,

of Mother Theresa's work with the destitute, Jean Vanier's work with the mentally

disabled, or Martin Luther King Jr.'s struggle for civil rights. The Christian beliefs of

these three figures were integral to their morally imaginative ways of responding to the

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[33] It is too great a topic to explore what is at stake in the competing moral visions of Aquinas and Hume, considering particularly whether the Christian ideal of love is ultimately incongruent with human nature (and therefore mangling) or points to something very deep in human experience and helps us to live it out more fully. How one answers this question is related to the extent to which one can ultimately see Christian humanist humility (or its possible secular analogue) as a virtue to which we should aspire.

[34] To this I would add that if Gaita is right that the nun's love was truly revelatory of the worth of those on the margins of society, then this fact asks to be made sense of and can serve as support for belief in a worldview that account for the dignity of all persons.

deep needs of those who were oppressed or seriously neglected, and the beliefs served as a source that helped them persist in their difficult work. For example, King's conviction that "the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice"—a conviction that is born out of his Christian beliefs and which cannot be made intelligible on a secular view—empowered his remarkable courage in fighting for equality. Again, it is not that those embracing a secular perspective cannot be similarly courageous. My point is that a secular perspective does not lend itself to nor have the conceptual tools for supporting this degree of courage as does a Christian one.

It should be clear from Chapter Four how easy it is for us to tacitly seek to do good in order to congratulate ourselves, but pride can only go so far in sustaining us in difficult work. We can think of Rayber in Flannery O'Connor's *A Violent Bear It Away*, an ex-Christian convert to secular humanism who sought to educate and so liberate his orphaned nephew Francis from the Christian fundamentalism in which he was raised. Rayber imagines that Francis will be grateful for his efforts but instead Francis proves to be wholly stubborn, recalcitrant, and combative. In the end, Rayber is not able to sustain his commitment to care for his nephew; far from the love he imagined himself feeling for Francis, against his own will, he ends up hating the boy. I want to reiterate that I in no way mean to imply that those who adopt a secular view cannot persevere in virtue when it is especially difficult to do so, nor that religious believers are not susceptible to significant, sometimes horrific, moral failure. My point is, rather, that a Christian humanist conceptual framework has resources that can empower virtue, which Hume's secular perspective lacks, and that these resources can make a real difference.

In these ways, then, a teleological perspective, which can make sense of a notion of strong normativity and, furthermore, a specifically Christian humanist conception of reality, can be motivationally impactful. Hume, in his attempt to avoid larger metaphysical questions in his moral philosophy, claims merely that sympathy is a principle of human nature, but he cannot explain why we should (understood in a strongly normative sense) widen our sympathy, and from the standpoint of expedience, he cannot explain why we should extend it very far. Christian humanism, however, is able to account for why we should seek a wider love and offers a view of reality that give footholds for this moral endeavor. Thus while Christianity as a form of revealed religion can be corrupting (a point that I will develop further in the Conclusion), it can also better point us in directions that Hume thinks are important (e.g., to a more extensive sympathy) than his own secular ethic can.

In Chapter Two I discussed Hume's reasons for rejecting the view, common to many theists and Deists of Hume's day, that God was ultimately needed to provide an account of moral motivation by making possible the notion of an afterlife in which goodness would be rewarded and evil punished. Against this Hume (through the characters Philo and Epicurus, who speak in a manner consistent with his avowed account of moral motivation in the second *Enquiry*) contends that the prospect of the afterlife is unnecessary for ultimately accounting for moral motivation (ECU 140, 146; D 60), that it is too remote to have the motivational impact it is purported to have (D 60), and also that a "steady attention…[to] eternal salvation" is "apt to extinguish the benevolent affections, and beget a narrow, contracted selfishness" (D 124-25).[35]

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[35] See section *IV.b.* of Chapter Two for my discussion of Hume's objections to the idea that the doctrine of the future state is morally necessary.

Moreover, as David Fate Norton has pointed out, Hume would have objected to the way in which appealing to the motivational importance of the final judgment instrumentalizes the virtues, where they are chosen not for their own sake but out of fear of punishment (2006, 157). Hume, we saw, replaces the explanatory role of the "future state" played in accounts of moral motivation with prideful concern for character and the peace of mind it affords as the ultimate source of moral motivation (EPM IX.2, 282; EHU 140).

I argued in section *I.* of Chapter Five, however, that prideful concern for character depends upon a strongly normative account of the virtues, which Hume's secular, scientific framework is fundamentally unequipped to offer. If we do strongly value virtues despite lacking a way of accounting for our normative sense of the moral life, we can succeed in pursuing them for their own sake and doing so will afford the peaceful conscience that Hume promises. Moreover, since our strong evaluations are also constitutive of our identity, loving the virtues for their own sake is inseparable from wanting to embody those virtues, making concern for our character a source of moral motivation. If we remain within the bounds of what Hume's science of man allows us to say, however, we have only the resources to claim that we should be motivated to pursue virtue because, given the way our passions contingently happen to be constituted, the life of virtue is ultimately more pleasurable or expedient for us. Ironically, it thus looks as if Hume cannot escape instrumentalizing the virtues, for without the means to account for strong normativity, he cannot explain why the virtues should be pursued for their own sake rather than for the pleasure they provide. Despite what I think Hume wants to say, from within his framework prideful concern for character as the ultimate source of

motivation therefore ultimately collapses into a sophisticated and enlightened form of (sympathetically-constituted) self-interest that acts for its own pleasure.

More importantly, insofar as Hume lacks a background metaphysical picture that can make sense of strong evaluation, his account of prideful concern for character as the ultimate source of moral motivation, practically speaking, has less power for motivating the moral life than one that can articulate and ground our strong evaluations regarding virtue. Hume seems to see the only significant way in which religion could purport to empower the pursuit of virtue is by the promise of eternal reward and the threat of eternal punishment. But this way of conceiving of the importance of God for moral motivation, I think, obscures the more significant ways in which a religious picture can be morally important. A specifically Christian picture, we have seen, puts forward a vision of love that can inspire a longing to love others with the love of God and to see the real beauty or goodness in places that seem most devoid of it.[36] Hume's failure to acknowledge how a religious framework can empower the moral life in this way is related to his inability to see the problem with his secular, scientific account of morality and pride as its ultimate motivational source; in failing adequately to appreciate the significance of the background picture provided by a religious view of the world, he also neglects to see the loss that his removal of a larger background picture entails for his secular moral philosophy.

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[36] This is not to say that the afterlife is not motivationally significant for religious people. But it can avoid the instrumentalizing charge if heaven is understood as Aquinas understood it. Heaven, in which one beholds God face to face (the beatific vision) is the culmination of loving God and virtue, a continuation of the "kingdom of heaven" as it is experienced in part on earth. It is not a mere external reward for the moral life; heaven (i.e. beholding God) is receiving what you love. See Jennifer Herdt's discussion, however, of how heaven comes to look like an external good in a hyper-Augustinian framework (2008, 104-6, see also p. 94).

III. Christian Humanist Humility, Faction, and Individual Flourishing

I have argued that a moral ontology can be motivationally significant in general, and I thus now want to consider specifically how the Christian humanist's metaphysical background picture can be motivationally helpful for addressing the specific problems for flourishing posed by our natural desire for the passion of pride. I want also to show how humility as a central virtue within the Christian moral vision is particularly important for mitigating these problems, and indeed is more helpful in this regard than virtuous pride and modesty as Hume understands them. I will also argue that although a version of secular humility can go further than Humean modesty in lessening the problems that the passion of pride can pose for flourishing, it is not as motivationally powerful as is Christian humanist humility.

We saw that the problems for flourishing that are rooted in our desire for the passion of pride arise because of our tendency towards vicious, sympathy-displacing comparison. I showed how a comparison that seeks to inflate one's pride can lead to moral blindness, such as falsely attributing vices to others, misconstruing the nature of a particular virtue so as to affirm the traits that one has, and simply failing to register morally relevant information about others due to an excessive self-orientation. Unjustified faction-inducing emotions such as envy and malice essentially depend upon vicious comparisons and often anger, hatred, and contempt, when unjustified, depend upon them as well. Sympathy-displacing comparison, furthermore, undermines the social conditions necessary for developing a healthy sense of self-worth (particularly for the young and the less gifted), and it contributes to a sense in those with socially-recognized talents that they are only worthwhile because of their achievements.

Against our tendency to vicious comparison, the Christian vision of communion and of charity as the crowning virtue upholds the importance of being sympathetically attuned to others and of relinquishing our attempt to secure our worth by those comparisons that are opposed to love.[37] Christian humanist humility (and magnanimity) is, as we saw, deeply tied to this vision. In many ways Aquinas's account of humility shows great insight into the destructive dynamics of comparison and of our tendency towards vicious pride, both for the prideful individual and for the social body. Thus, rather than being a chief detriment to human flourishing as Hume thought, Aquinas saw humility to be a chief cure. In what follows I want to discuss some of the ways in which each of the components of Christian humanist humility that I discussed in *I.* could curb the tendency to vicious comparison and the problems for flourishing that arise from it.

First, that aspect of Christian humility that involves fundamental reverence for and love of God, a reverence that seeks to order our loves according to the way that God loves (i.e., according to the objective scale of value) necessarily involves widening one's sympathy. Since according to a Christian conception of reality, all human persons are seen to have dignity, to be fundamentally loved by God, it is part of humbly ordering one's loves that we regard others as bearers of God's image. This involves a reverence for others that stands directly opposed to using them to prop up our ego in vicious comparisons. In other words, because Christian humility is understood in the first instance as submission to the will of God, and because the will of God consists primarily

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[37] As discussed, the metaphysical account of the world as teleologically ordered wherein the human person is made for and most deeply fulfilled through love of God and neighbor can provide a philosophical account of why we should seek to order our loves in such a way that is rightly responsive to the value of others: when we live in this way, we find true satisfaction.

in loving others,[38] an earnest attempt to cultivate humility is inseparable from cultivating a more extensive sympathy towards others.

Second, the dimension of Christian humility that involves recognition and acceptance of one's dependency also disposes one to a wider sympathy. Right appreciation of our dependence, I have argued, does not deny our agency, but rather makes us attentive to our real indebtedness. Awareness of how the contributions of God, others, and circumstance are integral to our own successes help to quiet our tendency to feel haughty in our achievements. It also inclines us, on the one hand, to be gracious to others in their weakness, recognizing that they, too, are dependent and perhaps did not receive the requisite support and resources more adequately to develop their characters and talents. The Christian vision of communion is one in which we (magnanimously) see our strengths as gifts, both in the sense that they are ours in part because of the help of God and others and also because they are meant to be offered to God and others. The direction of attention is outward: our gifts are for sharing, not for elevating ourselves. When we seek to secure our worth by vicious comparisons, however, our attention terminates with ourselves and others become fodder for our own self-glorification. Humility as awareness of our dependency, by contrast, directs our attention away from ourselves and disposes us to gratitude for those who have helped us.

Third, that aspect of Aquinas's account of Christian humility that involves regarding others as better than oneself by virtue of the gifts they have from God, further fosters a wider sympathy. While a Christian notion of the dignity of all should instill a

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[38] See where Jesus says, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matt. 22:37-40, NIV).

basic reverence towards persons, this component of humility inclines us to a reverence for the individual and her specific strengths. This attitude encourages an attentive receptivity to others, an orientation that seeks out and appreciates their gifts. This aspect of humility also requires the greatness of soul characteristic of magnanimity. It takes strength of character to be so generously attuned to others as well as to subdue our excessive thirst for recognition.

Fourth, the element of Christian humanist humility that involves (justly, i.e., not excessively) recognizing our failings also disposes one to a wider sympathy instead of vicious comparison. This sort of self-knowledge helps us appreciate the moral struggles of others, even if they are different than our own struggles. Alyosha Karamazov demonstrates this the way in which knowledge of our imperfections can lead to a wider love of others in his conversation with Lise about the money he had tried to offer a poor officer and his family. The officer, feeling ashamed by his poverty, had trampled on Alyosha's gift as a means of maintaining his honor. Alyosha speculates to Lise that the officer, having proved his pride, will accept the money at their next meeting. Lise asks Alyosha, "[Isn't there something in all this reasoning of ours,…isn't there some contempt for him, for this wretched man…that we're examining his soul like this, as if we were looking down on him?" Alyosha replies,

> No, Lise, there is no contempt in it. …Consider what contempt can there be if we ourselves are just the same as he is, if everyone is just the same as he is? Because we are just the same, not better. And even if we were better, we would still be the same in his place…I don't know about you, Lise, but for myself I consider that my soul is petty in many ways. And his is not petty, on the contrary, it is very sensitive…No, Lise, there is no contempt for him. (217)

Alyosha's insight into his own weaknesses allows him to see them in the weaknesses in others, to see the universal human struggle in failure wherever it is found. Thus, proper

humble recognition of our imperfections, weakness, and vulnerabilities can and should open us to others in a common struggle rather than to quickly "disown" others for their failures.

A Christian humanist moral vision that promotes charity and humility additionally has motivational resources for creating the social conditions that make possible the cultivation of a healthy self-esteem of individuals (thereby promoting individual flourishing). Not only can its vision foster a wider sympathy over vicious comparison and dispose one to seek out and affirm the good in others. It also encourages the sort of social approval that I noted in section *II.* of Chapter Five is most conducive to a stable self-esteem—that is, love rather than admiration. But more than providing the social conditions needed for learning proper self-esteem, this Christian picture offers a transcendent source of love upon which to build one's security (as St. Paul puts it in his letter to the Ephesians, to be "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3:17, KJV).[39] Moreover, the love of God is believed to be unconditional, i.e., not based upon our merits in relation to others but directed toward the concrete reality of the person, no matter how disabled or marred by vice. Hence, the sort of security provided by receptivity to divine love is one that is not subject to loss. And while it may not be possible to believe in and to root one's being in divine love apart from having analogous experiences of human love (as we find, for example, in the healthy parent's way of delighting in and wishing the good for his or her child), Christian community at its best strives to practice this sort of

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[39] There is rich Biblical imagery that expresses this point. For example, "Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him" (Colossians 2:7, NLT). Or, the Psalmist who says that the person "whose delight is in the law of the Lord…is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither" (Psalms 1:2-3, NIV).

love for one another—a practice that can make a significant difference in quality of family relationships, friendships, and the wider community over time.

In addition to the motivational limitations of Hume's secular ethic in general, his own accounts of pride and modesty are impoverished with respect to resources for mitigating vicious comparisons and promoting a wider, more extensive sympathy. As we saw, he cannot offer an account of strong normativity to which noble pride should seek to align itself. Furthermore, even if he could, Hume's account of virtuous pride seems not to exclude enjoying and perhaps even dwelling upon one's superiority to others. It thus seems that, contrary to what a surface reading of Hume's account of virtuous pride suggests, Humean virtuous pride ultimately does not transcend what are arguably vicious forms of comparison. Additionally, Hume gives no over-arching ideal of love to which we ought to orient ourselves, and which could inform and animate us to avoid the vicious, pride-building comparisons in favor of other-regarding attention. We also saw that his accounts both of pride and modesty, in contrast to Aquinas's account of magnanimity and humility, fail to emphasize our dependency, nor does he anywhere discuss the importance of reflection upon our moral failings—both of which I argued are helpful in curtailing vicious comparison. He also does not offer an account of human dignity that would support advocating that we adopt an attitude of reverence for others regardless of how well they have actualized their capacities. In all these ways, Hume's secular ethic and his articulation of virtuous pride and modesty are less able than Christian humanist accounts to promote extensive sympathy over and against our tendency towards vicious comparison (and all the problems for flourishing that arise from it) that so readily flows from our desire for the passion of pride.

I have pointed out, however, that Hume's framework allows for the development of secular account of humility as a virtue (and a correspondingly corrected portrait of virtuous pride) that goes a greater distance in mitigating vicious comparison and promoting extensive sympathy than Hume's own account. This humility would involve appreciation of our dependency on others, luck, and environmental factors for our achievements, cognition of our limited understanding of a person's whole story, and awareness of our failings, especially moral ones. (Moreover, the extent to which a non-Humean secular moral perspective could give an adequate grounding for strong normativity and human dignity, humility would include submission to the demands of virtue and reverence of others.[40]) Extolling this sort of secular humility as a virtue could encourage the cultivation of a wider, more extensive sympathy, and with it, discourage vicious comparison and the problems for social and individual flourishing that arise from it. However, as important as this possible secular component of humility is, it is a necessarily thinner notion of humility. Correspondingly, it lacks a metaphysical worldview wherein persons and love are at the center and which could therefore enrich our conception of the world and more richly inform and instruct our sentiments. Moreover, a secular perspective cannot appeal to a worldview that can make as obvious sense of the importance of humility and disposes us to it as much as a Christian humanist one.

We furthermore saw that a central problem that arises due to our desire for the passion of pride is that moral blindness and biases can become culturally inscribed. When this occurs, it is especially difficult to become aware of our blindness because others

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[40] See Ritchie 2012, however, for an excellent and succinct treatment of each of the major secular moral theories and their difficulties in accounting for strong normativity.

support our distorted moral judgments by way of agreement and by approving of us (thus

bolstering our pride) for displaying disordered values. A Christian moral ontology,

however, offers a reference point that transcends immanent social perception and the

Christian tradition has resources for re-aligning one's loves when our communities are

dysfunctional. If, though, as Hume proposes, we do without a larger metaphysical

framework that could help us to orient our moral life and instead rely only on social

praise and blame of a special sort, we may arguably be more prone to mistake too easily

the values of one's cultural milieu as virtue—a point Alasdair MacIntyre has made

particularly well (1981, 230-32).

I have been focusing on Aquinas's account of humility, since he has given

particularly extensive expression to Christian humanism, which I have been promoting

over hyper-Augustinianism and because, within that tradition, his account of humility is

perhaps the most detailed. It is worth, however, returning to Augustine at this point of

the dissertation, for we are now better able to appreciate the ways in which Augustine

saw humility to be necessary for acquiring the psychic harmony that follows from having

rightly-ordered loves (hence, for individual flourishing), as well as the peace that marks

the Heavenly City (hence, for social flourishing). Augustine's notion of the restless heart

includes within it the human search for security of being, a need that he found in his own

life led him to seek self-glorification (pride) through approval for his sexual exploits,

stealing of pears, and academic success, and which ultimately led him to seek humble rest

in God. This upward turn of humility provided the fulfillment and security (*firma

securitas*)[41] that enabled him to loosen his attachment to his disordered pursuits and to

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[41] Augustine prays, "[W]ho can take away from you what you love? There is no reliable security except with you" (C II.vi.13).

finding significance through approval of others for them. Augustine's autobiographical

narrative is meant to point to the inner workings of the human soul in general, and he thus

sees humility before God to crucial to healing our wayward loves, thereby securing inner

unity of desire and freeing us to love of neighbor rather than attempting to use others

merely for our own aims (including the vainglorious desire for excessive or wrongly

directed admiration rather than love). In light of the problems that accompany our natural

desire for the passion of pride (in Hume's sense), Augustine's stress on the importance of

humility makes good sense.

As we saw in Chapter Three, Hume, like Augustine (and Aquinas (see ST II-II:

129.6)) also sees the importance of security of self, for it facilitates a wider, more

extensive sympathy over vicious comparison. But he does not directly raise the question

of what can serve as more stable and good sources of security. Although as I pointed out

in *II.* of Chapter Five, Hume does not distinguish between admiration and genuine love,

his framework allows for such a distinction and with it, the possibility of humbly

allowing oneself to find a sort of security in the unearned love of others and in seeking to

return that love, thus fostering the bonds of friendship and family within which human

beings can flourish individually and jointly. Moreover, while Hume's avowed scientific

approach to ethics raises questions with regard to whether our strong evaluations can be

made sense of and thus whether the virtues can be pursued for their own sake, if we live

within our strong evaluative responses of the virtues, they can be pursued for themselves.

This also provides the possibility of finding security of self through commitment to the

virtues—goods that, if human nature is as stable as Hume supposes, are not subject to

change and loss as are the other things of which we might be proud (e.g., social position,

possessions, a beautiful appearance, and so on). The pursuit of virtue, too, leads to an

increasing inner harmony of desires and fosters a greater social harmony that the virtues

make possible.[42] Aquinas's articulation of true but imperfect virtue allows for the

possibility, from a Christian perspective, of a relative and virtuous security taken in

human love and the pursuit of goodness for its own sake, while still retaining the

Augustinian insights about the importance of God for individual and social well-being.

Such a possibility, far from only articulating how virtuous humility may be available to

pagans, is useful for pointing to real insights that a religious tradition can offer for secular

accounts of the virtues needed for flourishing.

I hope, then, to have shown how Christian humility can contribute to our

understanding of how best to cope with certain problematic features of our need for

pride/security, and that many of its insights regarding how to do so can be appropriated

within a secular perspective. I have also argued, however, that lacking the metaphysical

backdrop that could direct our attention and dispose us to a humility as well as a Christian

perspective can is a limitation of not only Hume's secular moral philosophy but also of

secular accounts of ethics as such.

IV. Conclusion

In Chapter Two I recounted Hume's observations about the way in which

religious (and particularly Christian) morality can undermine individual and social

flourishing, and I further brought out Hume's critique of Christian morality in Chapter

Three where I discuss Hume's objections to Christian humility and to making pride the

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[42] See Annette Baier's discussion of how Hume's "concentration in Book Two [of the *Treatise*] on conflict and emotional see-saws…are also important topics for Hume's later account of how morality depends on a calm and steady sentiment, and of how its role is to prevent or end unwanted conflict, both within a person and between persons" (1991, 133)

chief sin. In these chapters I have also stressed the strengths of Hume's secular moral philosophy for correcting these problems. In Chapters Five and Six, however, I have looked at the limitations of Hume's secular ethic and corresponding account of virtuous pride for promoting individual and social flourishing, and I have also shown how a Christian humanist moral framework and its corresponding conception of humility can better foster flourishing in these respects. It is to a final assessment of pride and humility, religion and secularity, and their relation to human flourishing that I now turn in the Conclusion.

CONCLUSION: HUMILITY, RELIGION, AND HUMAN FLOURISHING

I have explored how Hume's secular redefinition and inversion of the traditional Christian categories of pride and humility has been bound up in his critique of Christian morality and his concern that its appeals to a transcendent moral source undermine individual flourishing and exacerbate social factions. I have also shown how Hume's attempt to establish an ethic independent of any larger metaphysical or religious claims carries its own threats to flourishing at both the individual and social level, due to its limited ability to motivate and make sense of a moral imperative to cultivate a wider sympathy in the face of the temptations posed by our natural desire for the passion of pride. I now want to conclude by briefly looking at some of the broader issues and implications of this study for the more general topic of the relationship between religion, morality, and human flourishing.

Throughout this dissertation I have been implicitly developing a critique of the hyper-Augustinian tradition, a tradition Hume quite rightly saw as fraught with problems, however much he wrongly took it to be representative of the Christian tradition more generally. As part of my concluding assessment of the relationship between religion and flourishing, I want to make this critique more explicit by summarizing how the hyper-Augustinian positions on nature and grace, faith and reason, religion and morality (especially as understood by the Protestant Reformers) encourage the sort of factions and warped emotional formation that Hume charged revealed religion with facilitating. I will also summarize ways in which the theological commitments typical of Christian

humanists can in fact promote dialogue and proper emotional formation.[1] I argue,

therefore, that Christian humanism can serve as a healthier model for conceiving of the

relationship between religion and morality (and relatedly, faith and reason, the natural

and supernatural, etc.) with respect to religion more broadly.

Nonetheless, I also want to show that, due to our natural desire for the passion of

pride, religious frameworks—which necessarily provide the sources for the passion of

pride (self-approval) among the religiously committed and tend to be high aspiring in

their moral visions—pose certain threats to flourishing. I therefore think that Hume is

rightly wary of revealed religion, even when it has conceptual resources for curbing these

threats, as does Christian humanism. Thus, I will argue that despite Hume's failure to

recognize crucial theological distinctions, his critique of religious morality can motivate

religious traditions to reshape and improve themselves. I also, however, brought out in

the previous chapter how the strengths of a Christian humanist perspective highlight

certain weaknesses in Hume's secular moral philosophy precisely because it seeks to do

without a transcendent moral source and, similarly, I want to argue that religious

perspectives such as Christian humanism can serve to make secular moral traditions

better.[2] I will conclude, then, that an adequate account of flourishing must take account of

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[1] Whether Christian humanism can better promote mature emotional formation than Hume's secular perspective, however, depends in part upon how one conceives of mature emotional formation in the first place. Recall, for example, the story of Raymond Gaita's experience at the psychiatric ward that I discuss in section *II.* of Chapter Five. If we share Raymond Gaita's sense, as do I, that the nun's attitudes toward the patients *revealed* their real dignity, then we are apt to see a Christian worldview as having better conceptual resources for shaping our emotional responsiveness than a perspective that cannot articulate the significance of persons who are profoundly disabled or disturbed. If, however, we think that there is no real dignity among such persons, as does Peter Singer (1994, 4), for example, we are apt to see a perspective that recognizes this (such as Singer's) as better promoting emotional maturity.

[2] I am talking more generally here than my arguments allow. For me to claim that religious moral traditions (particularly Christian humanism) can serve to better secular moral traditions in general, we must be able to find analogous limitations in other secular moral traditions as I identified in Hume's. I do think these can be found, and Charles Taylor has argued particularly well that secular moral traditions have a difficulty grounding their moral sources (see particularly *Sources of the Self* but also *A Secular Age*). I trust,

the dangers of both secular and religious traditions and that humble dialogue across difference is needed to best promote flourishing.

I want to begin by reviewing some of Hume's worries about revealed religion. As I partly explained in Chapter Two, Hume's concerns about religion's potential for harm are deeply related to his epistemological convictions. Hume holds the following: First, religious claims are very remote from our sources of knowledge (i.e., sense experience) and, correspondingly, are highly uncertain. Second, experience is indeterminate with regard to what we are to conclude about our cosmic situation. Religious inquiry is thus largely bound to be fruitless, and it, moreover, deflects our attention from a philosophy of common life—i.e., from investing our philosophical energies in what we can know. Third, since experience is insufficient to support religious belief, such beliefs must be generated not primarily by reason, but by some other principle in human nature. Hume argues that it has arisen from fear of unknown causes.

On Hume's account, belief in revealed religion, thus, promotes faction for at least two reasons. First, because religious claims are highly speculative and inadequately supported by experience, they can vary widely. He holds that beliefs more immediately founded upon sense experience (i.e., those matters of inquiry pursued on the basis of a science of man) are confirmed to be more reliable by the way in which they comport with the experience of others. By contrast, competing religious claims cannot be settled by appealing to common experience since experience does not give conclusive evidence for any particular theological conception of God and the world. Revealed religions thus

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however, that it is worthwhile to gesture towards the broader implications of this specific focus on Hume and Christianity for issues surrounding secular and religious moral traditions in relation to flourishing more generally, however much particular features of different religious and secular traditions will be not insignificant.

spawn faction by virtue of the contentious and unresolvable nature of their claims. Second, he thinks that because religious conviction arises not out of reason but out of a fear-driven need to make sense of evil and misfortune, it is especially liable to foster those bitter divides that accompany emotionally-charged beliefs.

Hume's epistemological critiques of revealed religion are also, as we saw, connected to his concerns about the corrupting effects that revealed religion can have on the passions, which in turn undermines individual flourishing. In accord with Hume's belief that religious matters are remote from and ultimately incongruent with experience, he sees religious demands as being often at odds with the natural operation of the passions as we find them when we adequately observe human nature. For Hume, seeking to inculcate the virtues that are unique to religious morality (e.g., the monkish virtues) contributes to emotional malformation. This is because by following religious precepts that run counter to pleasure and utility, the religious person loses touch with the common sources of pleasure and pain that form the basis of sympathy and shapes our conception of the good. Thus, not only did Hume think that revealed religions put forward ideals of how we should live that are out of keeping with human nature and thus harmful to those who seek to escape the kinds of beings that they are. He furthermore thought these ideals would distort the very passions that would make possible discourse and agreement with others with regard to how we should structure our common life. For Hume, then, the effects of revealed religion on the passions undermines social as well as individual flourishing.

In part as a response to these problems, Hume attempts to sideline larger metaphysical questions by arguing that they are both futile and practically unnecessary,

and, moreover, by contending that a secular ethic grounded in an account of the ordinary operation of the passions as we find them in human nature is better able to make sense of our moral concepts and behavior. I argued in section *I.* of Chapter Two, however, that although Hume's skeptical arguments successfully show the immense difficulty of the larger questions of existence and that we cannot have certainty with respect to them, he does not give a convincing account of why larger metaphysical and religious questions should be barred from a philosophy of "common life," nor of why it is illegitimate to seek an overall picture of reality that best makes sense of the totality of our experience. Rather, it seems to me that just as Hume seeks to give the best, most probable account of various phenomena in his naturalistic projects, so too might we pursue (tentative and revisable) answers to larger metaphysical and religious questions.[3] I also show in Chapters Five and Six that Hume is wrong to see our answers to these larger questions as being, if not harmful, largely practically irrelevant.[4] Against this, I argued in Chapter Six that a Christian background picture can attune one to the world in a way that can be morally improving, and similar arguments can be made about ways in which various accounts of reality such as offered by other religious traditions can help (and/or hinder) our moral formation.[5]

Despite my objections to Hume's attempt to turn our attention away from larger questions, however, Hume's concerns about the negative effects of religion are important, even if he seems to lack sufficient awareness of the problems that can arise if we attempt

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[3] Perhaps we cannot avoid assuming certain answers to the larger questions. And if this is so, it is better to face our assumptions explicitly than to sideline them, since they will inevitably shape how we live.

[4] Two philosophers who cogently argue for the existential and moral benefits of a religious worldview are John Cottingham (see especially *On the Meaning of Life*) and, of course, William James (see *Varieties of Religious Experience* and "The Will to Believe").

[5] These two points are not unrelated. If a religious worldview can be existentially and morally beneficial, then we have special motivation for raising the larger religious questions and weighing whether it is reasonable to believe in or hope for certain religious answers to them.

to avoid such questions. Indeed, Hume's critiques of religion are based in first-hand experience of trying as a young boy to live out the psychologically damaging spiritual instruction of Scottish Calvinism as expressed in *The Whole Duty of Man* and in witnessing religious factions and religiously-inspired intolerance in Scotland (an intolerance that had significant personal ramifications for Hume who was denied a chair in moral philosophy at the University of Edinburgh because of his unorthodox views). Whatever the shortcomings of his views on religion, he is right that larger metaphysical and religious matters are more difficult and far less certain than many of the beliefs arising out of what he understands as "common life." He of course correctly sees that religious convictions admit a wide range of variation and hence are more divisive, particularly because of the way in which they are often emotionally charged. Hume also rightly recognizes that religious commitments can divert our attention from those things that unite us and are especially pertinent to our social life (namely, the shared goods of common life) and, relatedly, can blind us to experience, leading to poor emotional and moral formation.

Not all religious outlooks are equally disposed to these dangers, however. Among the two dominant theological traditions in Western Christianity, the hyper-Augustinian stance on the absolute fallenness of human nature and its implications for its conception of the relationship between faith and reason as well as between nature and grace do more than Christian humanism to foster the sorts of harms that Hume sought to mitigate by his turn away from religion. In Chapter Three I showed how Hume's concerns about religious morality as manifested in his critique of humility better targets the hyper-Augustinian conception of humility (and the broader theological commitments that

inform its conception) than the Christian humanist understanding. It will nonetheless be helpful at this point to restate more generally how, when compared with a Christian humanism, hyper-Augustinianism is particularly subject to Hume's critiques.

First, hyper-Augustinianism is more prone to faction because of the way in which it can undercut dialogue and appreciation for other perspectives. As was discussed in Chapter Three, the hyper-Augustinian view that reason is corrupted by sin theologically insulates hyper-Augustinians from critique from without. We saw in Chapter One various examples of hyper-Augustinian theologians who counter objections to their religious views not with direct argument but by charging the objectors with a sinful resistance to God. This sort of theological precedent for resisting the critiques of others and for seeing their objections as rooted in vice quite clearly lacks extensive sympathy and sufficient resources for genuine dialogue. By contrast, Christian humanists affirm that our ability to reason, even about moral and spiritual matters, persists to a significant degree despite the distorting effects of the Fall. Aquinas, for instance, argues that humans by nature (i.e., not by special grace) desire to know the truth about God and the world, and have the capacity to attain moral knowledge with regard to our natural ends. Such a view should promote dialogue among those who hold it, insofar as it assumes that others can have valuable insights to offer regardless of religious belief.

Second, the hyper-Augustinian separation of nature and grace also undermines dialogue, especially about moral matters. As we saw in Chapter One, on the hyper-Augustinian view, the Fall has thoroughly corrupted our natural passions such that all our affections ultimately issue from selfishness and pride and, accordingly, cannot be trusted to be morally revelatory. Such a view precludes openness to the passion-informed

accounts of the good held by religious outsiders, since such accounts are, for the hyper-Augustinian, necessarily skewed by sin. By comparison, the Christian humanist tradition, in accord with its conviction that the effects of the Fall were not totalizing, expects that much of our natural passions point us to the good. Aquinas, for example, held that the five natural inclinations, shared by all humans, orient us towards our flourishing as rational and social beings. This theological position assumes a shared domain of discourse (i.e., the sphere of natural human flourishing) and disposes us to think that we find great commonality with and can learn from the affective responses of others, including those from other religious and secular traditions. Furthermore, Aquinas's account of true but imperfect virtue allows that non-Christians can have virtues and thus can be morally instructive for Christians.

Third, the hyper-Augustinian denigration of reason and separation of nature and grace also makes that tradition more liable to Hume's critique that revealed religion can foster "artificial lives" and impede individual human happiness by inducing its adherents to forsake the ordinary sources of pleasure for imaginary, other-worldly goods. Hyper-Augustinians ultimately hold that: 1) our natural passions are fundamentally at odds with true Christian virtue and, 2) our (distorted) natural passions cannot point us to moral or spiritual truth. Those in the hyper-Augustinian tradition thus have theological precedent for holding a worldview that lacks continuity with and resists being challenged by the "natural and usual force of the passions" (T 3.2.2.18, 311) and the conception of flourishing that they would support. We can think, for example, of the assertion in the *Whole Duty of Man* that we are "poor worms of the earth…polluted and defiled, wallowing in all kind of sin and uncleanness…" (II.2-3, 34-35). The fact that we do not

naturally feel and judge ourselves or others to be utterly depraved would suggest that the

Calvinist position is too strong to be true.[6] If, however, our natural sentiments are seen to

be inherently untrustworthy, they are barred from informing or correcting one's theology

(unless of course one undergoes a paradigm shift). Instead, the hyper-Augustinian is to

seek to inculcate the emotions that her religious framework deems laudable, and since the

natural passions are seen as corrupt, the supposed correct emotions will be wholly

different in kind (even if they are mimicked by worldly virtue, as Nicole thought). Hence,

hyper-Augustinianism is more susceptible to Hume's charge that revealed religion creates

artificial lives, lives wherein one shuns ordinary sources of pleasure and embraces

disagreeable practices. (In showed in Chapter One how the Protestant Reformers in

particular tended to see our natural pleasure in our successes as vicious pride and

encouraged us to cultivate a deep and persistent sense of our wretchedness, which they

saw as proper humility.)

   The Christian humanist, on the other hand, maintains continuity between faith and

reason, grace and nature, and this can discourage the formation of artificially-induced

emotional responses.[7] Christian humanism both affirms the basic goodness of much of

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   [6] See Gill (2006, 7-11) for some of the horrifying passages that Calvinist children in seventeenth century England were taught to recite every morning in order to instill in themselves an (unnatural) belief in the profundity of human wretchedness and the eternal torment that we thus deserve.

   [7] It may seem that I am begging the question here by suggesting that Hume's account of the emotions (and the normative conception of the emotions provided by the general view) is the standard against which artificiality is measured. In the discussion of Pascal in *III.a.* of Chapter Three, however, I explained why I think that Hume's position is more convincing than the hyper-Augustinian one. The hyper-Augustinian view, I think, is dubious because: 1) it gets into certain unsolvable problems by seeing certain aspects of the normal operation of the passions as bad (e.g., because Luther condemns the natural passion of pride that arises upon judging that we have done good, he ends up perpetually feeling himself to be mired in damnable pride), 2) it must assume some satisfaction or fulfillment for the "graced" virtues but its anti-eudaimonist stance suspiciously regards this pleasure as expressing self-interest, and 3) it makes the emotional responses operative in the sphere of grace unintelligible.

   As I have indicated in Chapters Five and Six, I think there is a worthwhile debate to be had about whether a Christian humanist or a Humean account of well-formed emotions is a better one. I showed there is quite a lot of overlap in Aquinas's account of natural law (founded on the natural inclinations) and

this-worldly happiness while being attentive to the ways in which our passions need to be

transformed, particularly so as to be in keeping with the virtue of charity. Its conception

of nature and grace allows for the possibility that our natural passions can be morally

significant and that mature affective formation does not require a break with our nature

but that we direct and order our natural passions in the right sort of ways. We saw this,

for instance, in the way in which Aquinas defends magnanimity as a virtue and affirms

the appropriateness of our natural tendency to feel self-approval for our good qualities

(ST II-II:132.1), so long as it is accompanied by a grateful awareness of our dependency

on God and others for our strengths (ST II-II:131.1; ST II-II:129.6.r1). In general, his

account of the virtues are shaped by a distinctively Christian worldview as well as careful

attention to experience, and the Christian elements of his account of the virtues are seen

not as opposed to nature but as the fulfillment of it. Thus, while a hyper-Augustinian

conception of virtues sees virtues as involving passions different from those that are

natural to us and hence can foster the formation of artificial lives by promoting the

cultivation of these anti-natural virtues, a Christian humanist perspective is better able to

affirm our natural passions even as they are seen as needing to be rightly ordered.

Whether or not Christian humanism still causes a malformation of the passions in its

promotion of charity—a character trait that Nietzsche and others have charged with being

incongruent with human nature—as a guiding moral ideal is too large an issue to address

here. Nevertheless, it suffices to note that the Christian humanist tradition does not regard

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Hume's account of the virtues (and the passions of approbation that constitute them). Nevertheless, there are differences, for example, with respect to how high we should aspire, how we should respond to vices in others, etc. The most interesting issue, I think, is whether the demanding nature of charity leads us to emotional maturity or whether it is mangles our humanity by requiring us to distort our nature. Those who agree with Gaita that the nun's love for the psychiatric patients revealed their real value are apt to see a Christian humanist picture of emotional formation as mature (and spiritually liberating), but those who disagree with Gaita are apt to see it as mangling, an expression of artificial lives.

our natural passions as fundamentally needing to be violently reshaped into something wholly other than they are but, rather, as needing habituation into the virtues and elevation through grace. As such, Christian humanism is less susceptible to Hume's critique that religious morality involves the dishonest and unintelligible emotional formation that we see in artificial lives.

Christian humanism (and perhaps other religious forms that do not see human nature as wholly degenerate), at its best, thus can resist much of Hume's moral objections to religious morality.[8] I nonetheless think that Hume has put his finger upon certain negative tendencies commonly found among adherents of revealed religion, even among those whose theological categories should help to restrain rather than to encourage those tendencies. In what follows, I want to consider two ways in which revealed religion, even in its better versions, can play upon our natural desire for the passion of pride and natural sympathy (two original principles in human nature) in ways that foster the very factions and moral blindness that it has the conceptual potential to mitigate.[9]

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[8] I have been emphasizing the destructive aspects of hyper-Augustinianism, but I do think that they have contributions to make. The hyper-Augustinian tradition, precisely because they are more prone to be suspicious of non-Christians or "false" Christians, are perhaps less likely to acquiesce to the cultural biases of the day; however problematic the hyper-Augustinian tradition is, for those who think that Christianity offers important moral insight, it may be that the hyper-Augustinian stream is at times better able to remain fixed upon and to remind us of these insights than one that is (nevertheless rightly) more disposed to learn from other traditions. Furthermore, there is something admirable and instructive in the hyper-Augustinian yearning for perfection, even if this is accompanied with too strong a dissatisfaction with the state of the world. (This is analogous to the way in which Plato's ardent longing for the Forms inspires us to the noble but is unfortunately accompanied by a denigration of the imperfect, sensible world.)

[9] What I am looking at here is the relationship between our concepts and natural operation of the passions as they are typically found in human nature. In Chapter Six I focused on how our concepts can shape and inform our passions, and I have looked at some of the ways in which hyper-Augustinian, Christian humanist, or Hume's secular categories can impact our emotional formation. But we are not "blank slates" upon which ideas can radically shape our feelings and desires; human nature carries with it original principles that cannot be eradicated or easily bent. These original principles can influence how certain concepts are taken up in human life and can thwart our ability to live according to them. I thus want to look at how our natural desire for the passion of pride can effect how a religious framework is lived out, and to explore some of why religion can be destructive even when its central moral vision is one of love. In other words, I want to show how, although religion has the potential to help us to flourish, it also can exacerbate the potential for harm that accompanies our natural desire for the passion of pride.

First, it is inherent to the way in which religion becomes bound up with our natural desire for the passion of pride that it can lead to a limited sympathy—one that resists dialogue and can be used to justify faction-inducing passions, even among those religious outlooks that embrace a theology that discourages these tendencies. I explored in Chapter Four how our strong evaluations about that which is most noble, significant, and good, are inseparable from our deepest sources of the passions of pride (when we stand in alignment with what we evaluate as good) and humility (when we fail to live up to our sense of what is most worthwhile). Because a religious framework shapes the believer's strong evaluations and forms the backdrop against which she sees herself as moving closer or farther from the good, it is thus central to her self-assessments and assessments of others. I showed in *I.a.ii.* of Chapter Four that the link between our strong evaluations and our sources for pride or self-approval explains why our strong evaluations can be especially morally motivating: we desire to express in our character that which we regard as most noble, and this concern with the quality of our selfhood can empower us to avoid temptations to act contrary to our sense of the good.[10] However, it is precisely this link between our concern for the quality of our selfhood and our strong evaluations that can lead to moral blindness, vicious comparisons, and faction-inducing passions when our pride is threatened; it is only because our self is at stake in our strong evaluations that we tend towards these problematic responses when our strong evaluations are challenged, or when we fail to live up to our sense of the higher, or do so

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[10] And I argued in Chapter Six that since the teleological worldview of Christian humanism is better able to account for objectivity in ethics and since the centrality of love in the Christian moral tradition is able to ground and defend a moral vision that promotes extensive sympathy, I argued that it has better conceptual (and thus practical) resources for supporting the strong evaluations that are especially important in helping to motivate us to overcome the problems for flourishing posed by our natural desire for the passion of pride.

less well than others. Although I showed how the Christian appeal to a transcendent

moral source (especially as articulated within Christian humanism) has the potential for

motivating a wider sympathy than does Hume's secular perspective, it may be that the

weight and uncertain nature of religious claims makes religious beliefs particularly likely

to excite some of the more negative tendencies inherent to our desire for the passion of

pride, both as they relate to social and individual flourishing.

We saw that the natural desire to secure the passion of pride can lead to factions

in the social body if we seek to bolster our sense of self-worth through vicious

comparisons that block adequate sympathy with others. Often the more significant we see

the value against which we viciously compare ourselves to others, the more limited our

sympathy might be. We might, for instance, generate some degree of self-approval by

comparing ourselves to others with respect to what we regard as less significant goods,

i.e., goods which have little or nothing to do with the quality of one's character. When we

do so, as, for example, when we feel pride in having a more beautiful appearance or a

nicer house, our sympathy with those with whom we compare ourselves will not be

significantly diminished. Only if we have radically distorted the value of a beautiful

appearance or material possessions will that comparison preclude more significant forms

of sympathy.

Religious values, however, are inherently weighty and are regarded to be of

paramount significance by the religiously serious person. If, when engaging in vicious

comparisons, we see ourselves as more righteous than others, for example, for holding

orthodox beliefs, for following religious precepts more closely, or for more fervently

engaging in religious practice, then our self-approving pride will be more deeply felt and

the judgment of others for failing to bear the markers of religious piety can be more condemning in a way that makes us less attentive to our common humanity. (It is no coincidence that many religious persons are criticized for holding a "holier than thou" attitude—a saying that captures the lack of sympathy implicit in the comparisons by which one deems oneself to be qualitatively better than others.) Certainly many religious traditions affirm that the proper spiritual orientation towards others involves respect and a more extensive sympathy. We saw that Aquinas's account of humility involves a humility before others that encourages reverence for all persons. Nevertheless, due to the way in which our natural desire for the passion of pride tends to evoke vicious comparison, religion too often becomes a tool for unjust exclusion and repudiation of others. Moreover, because religion is seen to be of utmost importance by the religiously committed, the exclusion is of a particularly significant sort.

Furthermore, the way in which certain claims of revealed religion go beyond reason and essentially require faith may, when it supports our particular crucial positive self-assessments, also lead the religiously committed to resist dialogue and critique from without. As we saw, because our strong evaluations support our sense of our own worth, we tend to become defensive and closed to revising our views or even to acknowledging our ignorance when challenged by others (as Socrates well saw). Matters of faith always carry the potential to spark self-protective ways of avoiding critique, and they do so for several reasons. First, the content of faith pertains to the central ways in which the religious conceive of life as most meaningful and to question it can lead to a spiritually disorienting crisis of meaning. Second, many may worry that to doubt or question the core claims of their religion is a mark of unfaithfulness to God. Third, the uncertainty

inherent to faith (even faith understood to be reasonable) can arouse psychological

defenses against critique due to the (perhaps dim) awareness that many challenges to

faith can never be decisively warded off.

Thus far I have suggested two ways religion can promote faction because of the

way it can become bound up with our natural desire for the passion of pride: 1) it can be

used as a measuring stick to separate the "good" from the "bad" in a way that undermines

sympathy,[11] and 2) it can evoke our resistance to dialogue and critique. This social

division increases when, in our attempt to secure the grounds for our self-approval, we

falsely attribute vices to those who challenge our views and when unjustified faction-

inducing emotions are aroused toward those who make vulnerable our pride—two often

interrelated phenomena that were discussed in *II.a.* and *II.c.* of Chapter Four.

All of these tendencies are further exacerbated when they become collective. The

contagion of emotions in natural sympathy with those near and like us heightens the

sentiments constitutive of religiously-informed strong evaluative judgments, the

increased intensity of feeling generates a sense of certainty that can overwhelm due

epistemological caution, and the unanimity of view creates an echo chamber wherein a

sense of certainty is strengthened as is the tendency to mischaracterize outside positions

and the persons who hold them. This can especially damage the social body when the

types of moral blindness discussed in Chapter Four is shared among its members. Moral

blindness becomes increasingly destructive when it leads to collectively held unjustified

faction-inducing passions, for it is easy to regard these shared passions and the actions

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[11] Again, every strong evaluation provides a standard against which we can measure up as better or worse. This is not inherently problematic (indeed, it is moral necessary that we have a way to judge whether our actions and character traits are better or worse). What is, I think, problematic is when those comparisons undermine sympathy.

they might motivate as really justified. Some religious groups are particularly prone to employ theological justification for these attitudes, seeing hatred and violence towards others as obedience to God (the Crusades, burning of heretics, and Islamic suicide bombers come readily to mind) and, hence, as a source of self-approval. Moreover, because religions all involve communally gathering to jointly attend to its core teachings and to engage in rituals and spiritual practices, they provide a social context that is ripe for moral blindness and unjustified faction-inducing emotions to become collective and hence more dangerous. Furthermore, due to the height of the moral and spiritual ideals at the center of religious communities, they are also liable to suffer from internal factions as these groups inevitably develop different conceptions of how their religion is best understood or of how intently one must engage in religious practice to be considered "in the fold."[12]

The existential seriousness entailed by religious conceptions of the world not only makes religion prone to induce factions of a particularly deep sort; it also is connected to Hume's second critique of religious morality—namely, that it undermines individual flourishing. As I have pointed out, Hume saw religious morality to be too high aspiring, to demand what is not possible for us given our human nature. This places a needless psychological burden on those who judge themselves against a standard of divine perfection (see ESY 83), a standard which they are by their nature fundamentally unable to attain and which so often results in undue guilt and self-condemnation, i.e., the passion of humility. While, on the one hand, Christianity affirms the fundamental worth of all human beings and the unearned love of God for persons and hence can offer a source for security of the self that Hume's secular perspective lacks, on the other hand, the height of

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[12] This is a problem inherent to any group centering around an ideal, however.

Christian ideals and the seriousness of failing to attain them can weigh heavily on the psyches of believers.[13] And this can create a more pronounced insecurity of self than a less-aspiring moral vision, and especially one in which there is no accountability for one's life before God.

Because our strong evaluations are always significantly bound up with our natural desire for the passion of pride, however, these problems are by no means limited to the religiously committed. One's sense of meaning and self-approval, for example, can be had in being anti-religious, as can be seen in the pride certain atheists take for being "freethinkers" and for doing their part to liberate humanity from the bonds of revealed religion. (The strong evaluative affirmations underlying this perspective perhaps involve some notion of human progress and independence as well as a certain conception of hard-headed rationality that is courageously unwilling to be comforted by delusions.) This source of one's pride and significance can, just as with religious pride, lead to the same sorts of vicious comparisons, blocked sympathy, and unjustified faction-inducing emotions—both among individuals and larger social bodies—towards which religious groups are susceptible.[14] Atheists, for example, may generate a sense of pride in themselves through engaging in vicious comparison with (let us assume thoughtful) religious believers whom they unjustly portray as unintelligent and thus inferior to themselves. This depends upon and further leads to a limited sympathy and may instigate unwarranted hatred and contempt as well.[15] Moreover, like religious traditions, secular

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[13] Of course, unlike Hume, Christianity offers the promise of divine forgiveness, but a "guilt complex" is nevertheless not uncommon among Christians.

[14] One might think that Hume's insistence that answers to larger metaphysical questions are beyond our ken could help us to avoid these problems. But here one may take pride in seeing the complexities and difficulties surrounding belief and unbelief and can lack sympathy for those who do not see it.

[15] As I showed within the Christian tradition, certain perspectives can better foster or preclude sympathy. Ironically, I think that just as the hyper-Augustinian separation of nature and grace gives

traditions can use their own strong evaluative notions to justify exclusion or violence

against outsiders; the atheist regimes of the twentieth century demonstrate the capacity of

secular traditions for justifying violence with horrific clarity.

Perhaps we might think, then, the deepest danger for flourishing lies not in

revealed religion per se but with any moral vision that puts forward high ideals

(especially when coupled with intolerance for those who do not embrace them or who fail

to live them out) and, which excites a religious-like allegiance among its members.[16] We

might think of Hume as offering a counter vision not only to religion but also to any

attempt to put forward strong moral ideals that can inspire fervor (or "enthusiasm," as

Hume might say) among its adherents. Hume's moral philosophy expects and accepts

that at best there will be relatively minimal progress from human beings.[17] Rather than

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theological precedent to lack of sympathy and dialogue, Hume accepts and secularizes this separation in a way that similarly impedes sympathy with religious traditions. While hyper-Augustinians tend to see the realm of grace (e.g., divine revelation and activity) as the true source of wisdom and moral direction, Hume sees what can be ascertained empirically (i.e., the "sphere of nature") as the only legitimate authority that could govern our beliefs and actions. While hyper-Augustinians are apt to see "mere" human reason and the natural operation of the passions as being corrupt and thus as being morally misguiding, Hume is apt to see the views issuing from revealed religion as arising from superstition and thus as distorting and harmful. In short, both see reason and faith, the natural and supernatural, as two distinct spheres. The hyper-Augustinian position, we saw, gives theological justification for not engaging with rational arguments that would threaten it, insofar as those arguments are seen to originate from prideful reason. Similarly, though, Hume is likely to sideline revealed religion altogether insofar as he regards it as epistemologically groundless and not worth engaging. He leaves in his wake a reductionist empirical tradition that sees science or reason as opposed to faith, naturalism as opposed to super-naturalism, and similarly characterizes religious people as intellectually and morally backward, as people who, *qua* their religious commitments, have no valuable critiques or insights to offer. (Note that my point here is merely a practical one about how a worldview can foster or impede dialogue. I am not here arguing that a Humean position on these matters is false. It is worth mentioning, however, that I think there are better versions of non-reductive naturalism on offer. See, for example, the work of Thomas Nagel (2012), Fiona Ellis (2014), and John Cottingham (2012). See also Roger Scruton (2012, 2014) for important discussions of the limitations of scientific understandings of human nature.)

[16] I do not mean to limit "high ideal" or "high moral aspiration" to traditional morality. One need not embrace a more conservative morality, in order to hold some high moral principle that one thinks human beings should all live out (e.g., we can think of certain vegans, social justice promoters, etc.).

[17] This is a standard reading of Hume, though I do think that there is a tension in his affirmation of ordinary life and his account of greatness of mind. I maintain that for Hume a due pride can be taken in any station and for the degree of virtue one does have, but clearly Hume takes as his paradigm of virtuous pride the truly impressive individuals of whom "there is something so dazzling in his character, the mere contemplation of it so elevates the mind" (T 3.3.2.15, 383), and thinks that more pride and more respect is

holding up a guiding ideal that could desensitize us to who we are and what is possible

for us given the kinds of beings that we are, Hume attends to the principles of human

nature that limit or counter our natural other-regarding concern, tendencies which will

always be with us.[18] Instead of giving a moral principle for action that could be applied in

all cases, Hume provides an "on the ground" ethic by identifying what we do in fact

praise. When there are certain tensions in what we praise, Hume is disposed to let them

stand (as we saw in Chapter Five with respect to a degree of tension between noble pride

and extensive sympathy).

Hume's lower-aspiring ethic does have potential for minimizing the negative

effects on social and individual flourishing that a more demanding ethic or ideal for

humanity might instigate. It is more inclusive, and its account of virtue is not so

demanding that it sees the ordinary person as morally inadequate; rather, Hume widens

the net of those who might be called virtuous.[19] This helps curb the problem of factions

insofar as it discourages excessive comparison with others with respect to some ideal and

factious problems following upon the group identification and zeal that follows upon

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due them. It does seem, then, that on Hume's account there are grounds for aspiring high. Interestingly, though, it is unclear the extent to which Hume thinks that those who achieve greatness may justly feel contempt for the average (and less-than-average) person for his common amusements and minimal moral and intellectual development. If contempt is due here, it becomes unclear how deeply Hume affirms ordinary life in the end.

[18] Hume argues that our conception of what counts as virtue allows for an expected degree of self-interest. He says,

> When experience has once given us a competent knowledge of human affairs and has taught us the proportion they bear to human passion, we perceive, that the generosity of men is very limited, and that it seldom extends beyond their friends and family, or, at most, beyond their native country. Being thus acquainted with the nature of man, we expect not any impossibilities from him; but confine our view to that narrow circle, in which any person moves, in order to form a judgment of his moral character. (T 3.3.3.2, 384)

In other words, we judge a person who is, for example, generous and benevolent to friends and family to be a generous and benevolent person, even if she does not give and extend benevolent help widely beyond her known community.

[19] See Michael Gill's excellent discussion of how: "Hume's arguments do imply that our normative expectations are leashed to our predictive expectations, that our judgments of what people ought to do are made from a point of view shaped by our beliefs about what people are likely to do" (2006, 256) and Annette Baier (1991, 187).

collective allegiance to that ideal. It also should promote dialogue by focusing on that which brings pleasure to human beings as such, rather than on the notoriously divisive topic of religion. Additionally, by putting forward an ethic that is more in line with our natural passions, it would foster individual flourishing by lessening guilt and legitimating enjoyment of this-worldly goods.

We cannot clearly affirm Hume's route, however, as the best for promoting human flourishing. Although there are some gains in Hume's attempt to remain in the confines of "ordinary life" as he understands it, there are clear costs that accompany his approach. First, as we saw in Chapter Five that by avoiding all larger metaphysical questions in his moral philosophy, he deprives it of the moral sources that could articulate why we should seek a wider, more extensive sympathy, and hence for motivating us to overcome some of the problems that accompany the desire for the passion of pride. While Hume's lower aspiring ethic is potentially less volatile, I argued that it cannot inspire us to cultivate our potential for benevolence as deeply as a Christian vision can.

Second, it can be stifling for Hume's moral philosophy to preclude us from seeking the sources of our strong evaluations through raising larger metaphysical questions. We are meaning-seeking beings, i.e., beings who attempt to understand the world and ourselves, and it is unclear that we can sustainably turn our attention away from the ultimate questions or can do so without ignoring something important about being human.[20] Hume seems to neglect the extent to which our natural desire to

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[20] While Hume famously reports that his own "philosophical delirium" caused by angst over larger metaphysical questions was cured by playing backgammon and participating in the common affairs of ordinary life (T 1.4.7.9, 175), he gave much attention to cosmic questions through the body of his works (explicitly in EHU X-XI, NHR, D, and implicitly in T, EHU I-IX and XII, EPM). Even though his conclusion was that we are better off turning away from such questions, he was himself preoccupied with them throughout his life.

understand will inevitably and rightly lead many to seek to make ultimate sense of our deepest moral convictions. He also seems not to take seriously that a legitimate crisis of meaning and moral despair could follow from accepting his deflationary account of the nature of morality.

Third, Hume's lower-aspiring moral philosophy can be unsatisfying. Annette Baier nicely puts it that for Hume, "the qualities picked out as virtues be ones that human nature regularly does turn up" (1991, 187). Hume's moral philosophy can be seen as leveling insofar as it often affirms a mediocre moral development and by and large fails to inspire extraordinary moral achievement. The most morally admirable and ardent among us, however, do not themselves remain content with normal goodness and may well find a moral vision that can invite and challenge us to rise as high as we are able to be more fulfilling. Indeed, another aspect of being meaning-seeking individuals is that beyond our desire for explanation, we seek the significance, the meaningfulness of things, and growing in goodness is a primary way in which we can see our lives as being meaningful. Thus, while a low-aspiring ethic could well help reduce guilt and shame,[21] it is correspondingly shallower and less able to serve as a source of significance as a higher-aspiring one.

Finally, and most importantly, Hume's more minimally-aspiring ethic threatens not to remain at the mid-range of human moral achievement, but to sink quite low, since it removes the moral sources that help to nourish, sustain, and make sense of our deepest moral intuitions. Although his account of the virtues rests fairly easily with the natural

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[21] And given the important role that shame can play in the moral life, whether this is seen to be a good thing depends upon one's view of when and to what extent shame is warranted in a given situation. It is certainly undesirable for guilt and shame to be felt too intensely or for inappropriate reasons, however, and while Hume's ethic may arguably promote less shame than really is due, it likely would also correct the tendency to feel more shame than is appropriate.

operation of the passions, we saw that his account of the general view leaves a gap between our passions as we find them (biased and untutored) and our passions as the general view judges that they should be. (Indeed, no moral theory can affirm merely what we are, but must point toward what we ought to be.) I pointed out in the previous chapter that, in contrast to Augustine and his order of love, for example, Hume offers no highest moral principle or account of aspiration that explains how we ought to order our inner as well as social and political lives. This can be problematic not only because it leaves us without a clear moral focus, especially when our social surroundings are subject to moral blindness. It also disposes us to take the status quo as a kind of standard, and so to succumb to the cultural biases of our time. Moreover, because we have strong tendencies to self-interest and biased pride and readily tend to justify these impulses, a status quo morality will likely further decline as vice becomes more normalized and garners further widespread approval.

It is not, then, religion or remaining in the "immanent" sphere, or higher aspiration or lower aspiration, that is easily or entirely to blame for curtailed human flourishing. Rather, the various problems for social and individual flourishing that were discussed in Chapter Four stem from our natural desire for the passion of pride—a passion that is morally important insofar as it is crucial for moral motivation but that has great potential for harm when wrongly directed. I am not, of course, suggesting that, since the desire for pride is rooted in our nature, all perspectives are equally capable of dealing with the problems that arise from it. Indeed, I have taken pains to show that our conceptual frameworks make a practical difference, as is evident when I argued for the practical significance of a Christian humanist perspective over a hyper-Augustinian one

and when I argued that the Christian tradition (particularly Christian humanism) has resources for coping with the problems of pride that Hume's metaphysically silent perspective lacks. My point here is that in light of the propensities and temptations that come with being human, Christian morality and Hume's secular morality (and in many ways, religious and secular morality more broadly) are both problematic and helpful for human flourishing and are often problematic and helpful in different ways.

In light of this, I want to end with two concluding points. First, I think that we need both religious and secular traditions and the mutually corrective tensions they provide for each other in order for us best to flourish as the kinds of beings that we are. In particular, Hume's critiques of religion and his insight into the passion of pride in human life can help the religiously committed to attend to the ways in which religion can go wrong and, even in the case of Christian humanism, be used in ways that are contrary to the very heart of its moral teaching. On the other hand, many secular traditions such as Hume's can be improved by the ways in which critiques from religious perspectives can highlight how lacking an adequate moral ontology for his core moral concepts (e.g., extensive sympathy and prideful concern for character) threatens to diminish their importance for us over time and lacks the prescriptive power needed to curb more sharply the destructive effects of biased pride. Since we often fail to see the weaknesses of the traditions that inform our identities and ways of life, critical dialogue across difference is crucial to making us mindful of the harmful tendencies to which our own traditions are prone.

Such dialogue I suggest is not, as Hume proposes, one that sidelines larger metaphysical questions or from bringing our answers to these question to the table. Our

larger metaphysical frameworks (whether well-articulated or assumed) shape how we understand the moral life, and when we bracket off such questions we fail to understand the moral conceptions of others in a way that undermines rather than facilitates sympathy. We can think, for instance, of the way in which the moral sensibilities of conservative religious groups in the United States have been unintelligible to many non-religious persons and vice versa. As a result, there has been a breakdown of fruitful discourse of moral matters that concern United States political life—a breakdown which cannot, I think, be repaired without acquiring a deeper understanding of the worldviews and moral sources that shape the competing moral positions on offer. The less intelligible another's moral perspective becomes to us, the more likely we are to see them as morally insensitive and unintelligent. In so doing we prematurely disregard their perspective—a move that itself deepens faction and perhaps precludes us from receiving insights into the weaknesses and dangers of our own perspective.[22] Although Hume arguably sought to strengthen our sympathy by urging us to attend to a science of man rooted in common life rather than to larger metaphysical questions, this move may ultimately weaken our capacity for sympathy and discourse because it makes the metaphysical commitments of others seem more obscure, alien, and unintelligible.

While I therefore think that Hume goes wrong in proposing that we turn away from the ultimate questions in our moral discourse, he nevertheless teaches an important lesson, namely, that larger metaphysical debates should never be so central that we fail to appreciate what we share with others. In this way Hume serves as an important corrective

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[22] Hume himself seems to do this when he suggests that the 'artificial lives' of religious believers are unintelligible to those on the outside ("no one can answer for what pleases or displeases them"). Surely, though, a hyper-Augustinian perspective can be generally understood (and aspects of it can be appreciated) so that the way it shapes moral approbation and disapprobation of those within that perspective can make sense to outsiders.

to the excesses of religious commitments that devolve into bitter disputes and lose sight of our common humanity. We do well, rather, to seek an understanding of and critical engagement with the larger metaphysical frameworks that inform our differences as well as attend to our common human nature and to that which we, as humans, tend to agree (e.g., Hume's account of the virtues as those traits that we impartially judge to be useful and agreeable).

It is not always clear, however, to what extent we do agree, even within the sphere of common life and the natural operation of the passions, as Hume understands them. We may well affirm that justice, temperance, benevolence, etc. are agreeable and useful to ourselves and others, but how we understand what *is* just, temperate, benevolent and how high we should aspire will be shaped both by the extent to which we have acquired the virtues as well as our overall understanding of the nature of reality. We saw this especially clearly when looking at the accounts of what is involved in virtuous and vicious forms of self-assessment in relation to others. Deep moral disagreement may always be part of the human condition, and while consensus is desirable, more important is to learn how best to cope with disagreement, to keep alive our awareness of the full humanity of our opponents, and to be as receptive to learning from and being challenged by those of different views.

This brings me to my second concluding point. For full human flourishing we thus need a virtue to help us cultivate openness to others and a willingness to see our own weaknesses and failings. Thus, we need the virtue of humility—a virtue that has been much neglected (even, I think, in the Christian tradition of late) and misunderstood. In the previous chapter, through showing the ambiguity of Hume's accounts of pride and

modesty, I provided a brief sketch of what a naturalistic account of humility might look like in light of our dependencies, limitations, and failings and how a right appreciation of these conduces to flourishing. A thorough account of humility is far beyond the bounds of what I can achieve in this dissertation, but these initial proposals give some sense of what a more developed account might include. Certainly any conception of virtuous humility, as we have seen, will be shaped by the larger worldview within which it conceived, and thus, there is no metaphysically or religiously neutral account of humility to be had that would be accepted by all. Nevertheless, my suggestions of what a naturalistic account of virtuous humility would involve, I think, could be widely affirmed across various traditions insofar as it can be seen to be constitutive of natural human flourishing, even if it would be modified and enriched by the particular religious content of a particular religious framework. (We saw, for example, that Aquinas's account of humility involves distinctively Christian elements and also elements that can be affirmed by non-Christians and non-religious persons.) As such, it could be jointly pursued and sought as a guiding virtue in moral disputes that stem from our different larger metaphysical commitments.

In any case, what I think has been shown by Hume's account of the psychological significance of the passions of pride and humility and the way in which they pose problems for human flourishing, is the need to articulate an account of and to practice a virtuous humility if we are to curb the destructive potential of our natural desire for the passion of pride. Such humility would foster a wider sympathy and check our tendency to moral blindness and unwarranted faction-inducing passions. It would better promote communities marked by solidarity rather than obsession with social ranking. And it

would be wed to a true magnanimity founded on generous sympathy and courageous self-critique rather than a sham pride that requires invidious comparisons for its sustenance. In short, although Hume rejects (a certain conception of) humility as a monkish virtue, I suggest that true humility would promote the very social and individual flourishing that Hume sought, with his secular ethic and rehabilitation of pride, to encourage.

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