



THE PLACE OF REASON IN DAVID HUME'S PHILOSOPHY  
OF ACTION AND MORALITY

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SUMMARYPART ONE

- I. Difficulties in faculty talk. Hume's faculty talk about reason is inconsistent with his empirical philosophy.
- II. The role which demonstrative reasoning plays in conduct. Hume's view that such reasonings alone cannot cause actions is correct.
- III. The role which empirical reasoning plays in conduct. A defence of Hume's view that empirical reasonings alone cannot cause actions and that a desire is necessary to cause actions. Non-Humean notions of "cause" and "desire". A consideration of certain problems about Hume's non-evaluative senses of "reasonable" and "unreasonable". An examination of a few theories of practical reason.
- IV. A reformulation of Hume's argument to prove that reason cannot oppose passions. An examination of the different interpretations of Hume's statement "Reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions." My own view.

- V. My analysis of Hume's view of the influence of beliefs on agents. An examination of Falk's criticisms of Hume.
- VI. Hume's muddled distinction between calm and violent passions. An examination of Hume's uses of his doctrine of calm passions.

#### PART TWO

- VII. An examination of Hume's seven arguments concerning the place of reason in morals.
- VIII. Hume on "is" and "ought". An examination of the different interpretations of Hume's "is-ought" passage. My own interpretation.

#### PART THREE

- IX. Statement of my reasons for taking up the problem of justification of actions and moral judgments. Formulation of two arguments against those who use "reasonable" and "unreasonable" for actions in a non-Humean manner.

- X. An examination of the theories of Baier, Edwards and Toulmin.
- XI. An examination of Brandt's Qualified Attitude Method. Hume's views about the meaning of moral terms and moral judgments. Hume's refusal to use these views in an attempt to settle the problem of justification in ethics. Hume's superiority over Brandt. Arguments against the supposed parallel between the Qualified Attitude Method in ethics and induction in science.
- XII. An examination of the "vindication" of ultimate moral principles by Feigl and Taylor. Arguments against the supposed parallel between vindication of an inductive policy and that of ultimate moral principles. Concluding remarks.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Abu Taha Hafizur Rahman

16.6.70,

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PREFACE

This thesis is an examination of Hume's views about the place of reasons, reasoning and reasonableness in actions and morals. Hume has often expressed his views polemically, taking issue with his rationalist opponents. And sometimes his language is as obscure as that of his adversaries. In his zealous controversy with the rationalists Hume has often said things which he does not really mean. The works on Hume which have so far been written have not disentangled his intentions from such obscurities, especially from his obscure faculty talk. I have tried to envisage what his views would be when they are freed from such obscurities, and have tried to present them here. A large part of the thesis is given to clarification and a proper interpretation of his views on actions and morals. I have often found it necessary to reformulate his arguments (keeping them close to his intentions) to give them a cogent form.

Hume's notion of reason as a faculty is muddled, and his meaning of "reasonable" is arbitrary, if not perverse. But I have thought that to be over-concerned with these defects of Hume would be to lose sight of many of the valuable things which he has said. My main concern has been to dig out from his writings the important things which he has said or meant. This, however, has

not led me to neglect to mention his fallacies whenever I have been able to detect them. Some of the things in Hume's philosophy of action and morals which I have found important and which constitute my study are as follows: his explanation of actions in terms of both a desire and a belief, his views about the role of desire in morals, his distinctions between the theoretical and the practical fields, between facts and values, between causal description and justification, and between reasonings, judgments and beliefs on the one hand and actions and passions on the other, etc.

From his non-evaluative sense of the epithets "reasonable" and "unreasonable" Hume has derived certain paradoxical conclusions. But he has not shown what is wrong with the standard evaluative use of these epithets. Thus he has left a gap in his philosophy. I have tried to fill in this gap in the third part of the thesis by attempting to show that there is a philosophical confusion in the standard use of the phrase "reasonable action". This confusion relates to the limits of justification of actions and moral judgments.

Many moral philosophers have attempted to solve the problem of justification in morals by trying to establish a parallel between justification of the matters of morals and that of deductive and inductive reasonings, between an alleged validity of choice and the validity of inference, between reasonable choice and

inference. I have found it quite in the line of Hume's thinking to protest against constructing such parallels. One of my concerns has been to show that such parallels and analogies are seriously misleading.

To do justice to Hume I have consulted both his Treatise and his Enquiry. I have not found it necessary for my purpose to discuss, except incidentally, the historical background of Hume's philosophy of action and morals. Good works on this subject already exist. (See for instance N.K. Smith's The Philosophy of David Hume; M.S. Kuypers' Studies in the Eighteenth Century Background of Hume's Empiricism.) Also, I have not gone into the problem of judging Hume's originality and his debt to his predecessors. I have tried to present his views on actions and morals systematically and to examine them as I have found them in his writings.

PART ONE

REASON AND CONDUCT (IN GENERAL) IN  
HUME'S PHILOSOPHY



PART ONE: REASON AND CONDUCT (IN GENERAL) IN  
HUME'S PHILOSOPHY

SYNOPSIS

I. HUME'S FACULTY TALK ABOUT REASON

The different senses in which Hume has used the word "reason". An examination of his faculty talk about reason: Faculty talk raises non-empirical questions which are odd in Hume's empirical philosophy. To take reason as a power would be inconsistent with Hume's denial of our having any idea of power. Faculty talk about reason is inconsistent with his theory of causation. In the absence of our knowledge of what the faculty of reason is, it is possible to attribute anything to that faculty. By postulating faculties we do not explain anything. Faculty talk about reason is inconsistent with Hume's analysis of self. The important things in Hume's philosophy can be expressed without using faculty terminology. I shall replace his faculty talk by speaking instead of what he considers to be "the products of reason".

II. THE PLACE OF DEMONSTRATIVE REASONING IN CONDUCT

Hume's distinction between demonstrative reasonings and reasonings concerning matters of fact seems to be exclusively between demonstrative reasonings of the mathematical kind and inductive reasonings. There is nothing wrong with Hume's view that demonstrative reasonings alone cannot cause actions. The place of demonstrative reasonings in conduct lies in assisting empirical reasonings in whatever role the latter plays in conduct.

III. THE PLACE OF REASONING CONCERNING MATTERS  
OF FACT IN CONDUCT

By using Hume's notions of "cause" and "desire" it cannot be proved that a desire is the immediate cause of an action and that

empirical reasonings by themselves do not cause actions. But these can be proved given non-Humean notions of "desire" and "cause". Reply to possible objections. Empirical reasonings (or judgments about means to ends or about existence of objects) are part causes of the type of action which Hume has considered. Hume expresses himself misleadingly. Hume's use of the epithets "reasonable" and "unreasonable" is non-evaluative. Although Hume has assimilated "reasonable" to "true beliefs", he can justifiably use "reasonable" for arguments in view of the close connection between the notion of "validity" and that of "truth", and in view of what he says about the range of reason in his discussion of actions and morals. Objection to Hume's view: beliefs can be reasonable when they are not true; if so, then actions also can be reasonable when they are not true. A reply to this objection: beliefs, even when they are not true, have a close connection with truth and falsehood, a connection which does not exist in the case of actions and passions. Hume's notions of "reasonable" and "unreasonable" are arbitrary; he has not shown what is wrong with the standard uses of these epithets. Nevertheless, the philosophical point raised in his argument concerning the reasonableness or unreasonableness of actions and passions is correct. An examination of a few criticisms of Hume's view of practical reason. Jackson's notion of "reasoned choice" is either something like Hume's notion of choice guided by empirical judgments or it is something which involves certain difficulties. Argument against Jackson's claim that reasonable choice is analogous to reasonable inference. There is no parallel between "validity of choice" and "validity of inference". Smart's non-derivative sense of "reasonable actions" (actions done in accordance with moral rules) invites the problem of reasonableness of those rules. Smart's analogy between reasonable deductive and inductive inferences on the one hand and reasonable actions on the other is misleading. Edgley's attribution to Hume of the view that there cannot be a reason for doing anything is misleading. Edgley fails to show "Hume's mistake"; his view of practical reason is laden with difficulties. Summary.

#### IV. SUPPOSED CONFLICT BETWEEN REASON AND PASSION

A reformulation of Hume's argument to prove that reason cannot oppose passion, by freeing his argument from his faculty talk. Hume's muddled psychological account for the common belief in the "combat of reason and passion" does not affect his argument here. Different interpretations of Hume's statement "Reason is and ought only to be the slave of passions": (1) N.K. Smith's interpretation that here Hume is advocating how we ought to act is not supported by evidence; on the contrary, there are good reasons against this inter-

pretation. (2) Glathe's, Ardal's and Broiles' view that "ought to be" refers to a linguistic recommendation about how the word "reason" is to be used imputes to Hume an odd syntax, and, further, an inconsistency without any justification. (3) Another possible interpretation suggested by M.C. Bradley; it is free from the difficulties of the second interpretation, but it is not supported by evidence. (4) My interpretation: "ought to be" refers to nothing, it is merely an expression of Hume's youthful exuberance in challenging the rationalists who said "Passions ought to be the slave of reason". Justification for my interpretation.

#### V. THE MANNER IN WHICH JUDGMENTS AND BELIEFS INFLUENCE AGENTS

Hume's view that a belief may excite or serve a desire. Some passages in the Treatise seem to suggest that the influence of beliefs and judgments is automatic. This view needs to be qualified; the necessary qualifications can be found in Hume's writings. The crucial phrase "being convinced of" analyzed. Different senses of "strongest desire" and "stronger desire". When Hume talks about the automatic influence of beliefs, he does not refer to situations of conflict. My reading of his view: (1) In a situation where there is no conflict of desire, the belief of whose truth or falsehood the agent is "convinced" (in the given sense of the word) will automatically influence him. (2) In a situation of conflict, the agent's "strongest desire" (in the given sense of the phrase) causes him to disregard his belief if it is relevant to a "weaker desire" (in the given sense of the phrase). "Strongest desire" for an end (as opposed to a means) is not justified by a reason, although it may be aided by a reason or belief in order to result in an action. "Strongest desire" for a means may be justified by a reason. An examination of Falk's criticisms of Hume. Falk's criticisms are based on a misunderstanding. Falk's conditions of "right minding" and "relevance" of reasons are already there in Hume's notion of "being convinced of". Certain other difficulties in Falk's criticisms.

#### VI. THE DOCTRINE OF CALM PASSIONS

The salient features of Hume's doctrine of calm passions. His distinction between calm and violent passions is muddled and confused. They are two different kinds of things whereas Hume has

taken them as two things of the same kind. Ryle's "inclination" and "agitation". Absurd consequences follow from Hume's distinction. Hume's use of the doctrine of calm passions as a psychological account for the rationalists' belief in the "combat of reason and passion". Both the rationalists and Hume have talked nonsense: Hume's other use of the doctrine: rules of morality and the impartiality of our point of view are based on "a general calm determination of the passions, founded on some distant view or reflection". This is a valuable and sensible suggestion. Hume's superiority over his rationalist opponents. Baier's notion of "good reasons" which determine ends is already there in Hume's notion of "general calm determination of the passions", although Hume's notion is confused. Hume would have to say and could consistently say against Baier's cases that what the agent introspectively considers to be the more intense desire is the weaker one in respect of motivating influence. The dispute between Hume and his critics is, in some cases, merely verbal. Hume has not preached any irrationalism. To understand the value of his philosophy it is better to ignore his controversy with the rationalists and take his points independently.



## I.

## HUME'S FACULTY TALK ABOUT REASON

The problems with which I am concerned relate to Hume's notion of reason. Hence at the outset it is necessary to consider his use of the word "reason" and note if this involves any difficulty. Hume has used the word "reason" in many different senses. Some of them are: (1) cause<sup>1</sup>, (2) ground or justification<sup>2</sup>, (3) discovery of truth and falsehood<sup>3</sup>,

<sup>1</sup>...the chief reason, why men attach themselves so much to their possession is, that they consider them as their property, and as secur'd to them inviolably by the laws of society. (T.482-3).

All references to Hume's A Treatise of Human Nature are to Selby-Bigge's edition, 1967. I refer directly to the pages of this edition, by giving the number of the page, after the letter T. All references to Hume's Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding And Concerning The Principles of Morals are to Selby-Bigge's edition, 1966. I refer directly to the pages of this edition, by giving the number of the page, after the letter E.

<sup>2</sup>...we can give no reason for our most general and most refined principles, beside our experience of their reality...(T.xxii).

... can any one give the ultimate reason, why past experience and observation produces such an effect, any more than why nature alone shou'd produce it? (T. 179). That even after the observation of the frequent or constant conjunction of objects, we have no reason to draw any inference concerning any object beyond those of which we have had experience... (T. 139). After the most accurate and exact of my reasonings, I can give no reason why I shou'd assent to it...(T. 265).

<sup>3</sup>Reason is the discovery of truth and falsehood. (T. 458).

(4) an unintelligible instinct.<sup>1</sup> However, Hume's treatment of the problem of reasonableness of actions and moral choice is often expressed in a language in which "reason" is taken not in any of these senses but in the sense of a faculty. It is true that in his arguments he sometimes takes "reason" in sense (2). But quite often he is prone to use "reason" as a faculty word. In Book I of the Treatise, Hume tries to establish that our inductive inferences are not the products of reason.<sup>2</sup> Here the notion of reason is that of a faculty which is restricted to making demonstrative reasonings. In Book II of the Treatise, the notion of the faculty of reason is expanded so as to include in it the acts of performing inductive inferences as well.<sup>3</sup> And then it is shown that our actions are not caused by reason alone.

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<sup>1</sup> ...reason is nothing but a wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls, which carries us along a certain train of ideas, and endows them with particular qualities, according to their particular situations and relations. (T. 179).

<sup>2</sup> Reason can never shew us the connexion of one object with another, tho' aided by experience, and the observation of their constant conjunction in all past instances. When the mind, therefore, passes from the idea or impression of one object to the idea or belief of another, it is not determin'd by reason. (T.92). Reason can never satisfy us that the existence of any one object does ever imply that of another; so that when we pass from the impression of one to the idea or belief of another, we are not determin'd by reason. (T. 97).

<sup>3</sup> The understanding [reason] exerts itself after two different ways, as it judges from demonstration or probability; as it regards the abstract relations of our ideas, or those relations of objects, of which experience only gives us information. (T.413).

In Book III of the Treatise, the same notion of reason prevails<sup>1</sup>, and there it is maintained that reason is not responsible for our moral judgments. As I shall be concerned with his discussion of the place of reason in action and moral choice and as, quite often, he deals with his problems here by treating reason as a faculty, it is necessary to examine faculty talk, especially such talk involving the word "reason". I shall try to show that Hume's language here is misleading and that his problems, as he has actually dealt with them, can easily be discussed without using any faculty talk. Nevertheless, the difficulties involved in Hume's use of such misleading language must be noted.

The first difficulty about taking "reason" in the sense of a faculty is that we are immediately moved beyond the empirical realm and involved with questions which cannot possibly be answered. Questions like "Do we taste food with our tongue?", "Do we see that tree with our eyes?" are very different from questions like "Does reason move us to action?" and "Does reason make inductive inferences?". There may not be anything intrinsically wrong with raising non-empirical questions, but it is certainly inconsistent with the empirical trend of Hume's

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<sup>1</sup> "...the operations of the understanding [reason] divide themselves into two kinds, the comparing of ideas, and the inferring of matter of fact..." (T. 463).

philosophy. For one who reduces every word to its correspondence with an idea and eventually to an impression<sup>1</sup> it is very odd to make use of a faculty language which, by his own theory of meaning, is nonsensical.

It may be thought that the faculty of reason just is the power to do certain things. But then there is a familiar argument of Hume himself which may be used against such a view:

All ideas are deriv'd from, and represent impressions. We never have any impression, that contains any power or efficacy. We never therefore have any idea of power. (T. 161).

So, at least Hume cannot consider reason as a power.

There is another but related reason why he cannot treat reason as a power or a faculty. To take reason as a power or a faculty is to treat it as a cause of certain effects, namely, those such as the drawing of conclusions, which are said to be the activities of reason. Now, according to Hume's theory of causal inference, we cannot make such an inference unless both

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<sup>1</sup>Note for instance the following statement of Hume: "When we entertain...any suspicion that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea (as is but too frequent), we need but enquire, from what impression is that supposed idea derived? And if it be impossible to assign any, this will serve to confirm our suspicion." (E. 22).

the cause and the effect are experienced. We do not experience or perceive the faculty or power "reason" but only the activities which are claimed to be its effects. What right do we have to take reason (faculty or power) as their cause? In the absence of experience of the cause of an event anything might be considered as its cause. This is a special difficulty which besets Hume's notion of reason as a faculty.

Unless we know what reason is as we know what eyes are, it is impossible to decide what reason can do. That is why we find a notorious disagreement among faculty theorists themselves as to what reason can do. It is an arbitrary matter to ascribe any special activity to reason when we do not know what it is. We do not have any objective criteria to identify the activities of reason.

Following Ryle<sup>1</sup> we may trace a logical difficulty in faculty talk about reason. When one supposes that behind every visible act of inferring, deducing, etc. there goes on an anterior act in the faculty of reason, that is, when one takes this faculty as the cause of the visible acts of judging, one is caught in a vicious circle. We characterize the

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<sup>1</sup>G. Ryle, "Knowing How and Knowing That", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 1945-6. See also his Concept of Mind, Chapters 2 and 9.

exterior act, if it is valid or correct, as an intelligent or rational act. But what about the anterior act of reason? That act itself has to be intelligent or unintelligent, rational or irrational. As Ryle says, "That thinking operations can themselves be stupidly or intelligently performed is a notorious truth...".<sup>1</sup> When the rationality of any given performance is credited to the rational execution of some anterior performance then it would in its turn require exactly the same treatment. This means that it is impossible that the "act of reason" could ever be begun.

Another difficulty with faculty talk in general is that once we start postulating faculties or unwitnessable causes for outward behaviour, there is no end to this. Remembering a poem is different from remembering a face. Then, why should one be content with the faculty of memory? Why shouldn't one postulate one faculty for remembering poems and another for remembering a face, and so on? Similarly, corresponding to addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, why shouldn't there be a faculty for each? Why be content with one faculty, reason?

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<sup>1</sup>Ryle, "Knowing How and Knowing That", p. 2.

In fact, if our purpose is the explanation of conduct and such faculties are postulated as causes, then this purpose is not served at all. If a student asks his teacher how we remember and is told "By the faculty of memory", he is not made a bit wiser. It would be like satisfying a child's curiosity by telling him that fish swim by the faculty of swimming. To appeal to an occult faculty is not to explain anything at all, but only to attempt to hide our ignorance.

I have said that Hume's faculty psychology is inconsistent with his theory of causation. It can further be remarked that it is inconsistent also with his analysis of the self. It is surprising to find a philosopher who denies the existence of a soul-substance on the ground of our lack of any experience of such a substance and who reduces the self to a bundle of impressions and ideas, talking in terms of a faculty. I think that Hume's associationism (i.e., his explanation of behaviour in terms of the theory of impressions and ideas and the laws of association) may be taken as a revolt against faculty psychology. (Although Hume nowhere explicitly says that his associationism is a revolt against faculty psychology, yet this is clear from the general tenor of his philosophy.)

Indeed, Hume at times comes very close to realizing that talk about faculties is a nonsense, that faculties are the fictions of the philosophers' imagination. While pointing out the "fictions of the ancient philosophy, concerning substances, and substantial forms, and accidents, and occult qualities", Hume comes to see that the word "faculty", too, does not refer to any real entity. He says that "amid all their disappointments and afflictions" the philosophers find a consolation "in their invention of the words faculty and occult quality". (T. 224). "...after the frequent use of these terms, which are wholly insignificant and unintelligible [my underlining], we fancy them to be on the same footing with" those terms which are significant and intelligible. "By this means these philosophers set themselves at ease, and arrive at last, by an illusion [my underlining], at the same indifference, which the people attain by their stupidity... They need only say, that any phenomenon, which puzzles them, arises from a faculty or an occult quality..." (T. 224). So it is pretty obvious that Hume is not happy with the ancient philosophers' notion of "faculty". But, strangely, and in a marked inconsistency with his own empirical philosophy, Hume himself comes to talk about the faculty of reason.



The difficulties involved in Hume's faculty talk about reason might give the impression that because of these perhaps his philosophy falls to pieces or that there is nothing important in his philosophy of action and morals. This would be a mistake. The problems which he has discussed can be treated without any faculty talk. These problems concern the roles of reasonings and beliefs in actions, the part which desire plays in action, the roles of feeling and reasoning in our making moral distinctions and in our accepting such distinctions, the nature of moral judgments, the gap between facts and values, etc. Certainly, no one would deny the importance of these philosophical problems. I shall try to present Hume's arguments without his faculty talk so as to bring out what is important in them. For this I will have to replace his faculty terminology by speaking instead of what he considers (in his discussion of actions and morals) to be reason's concern, namely, judgments, reasonings and beliefs. This, I hope, would make his points free from obscurity while keeping them close to his intentions. This will enable us to assess the cogency of many of his arguments. It is indeed unfortunate that Hume expresses himself through faculty terminology. In this respect he could not rise above his time. He did not learn all his own lessons.

## II

## THE PLACE OF DEMONSTRATIVE REASONING IN CONDUCT

In this and in the following four chapters I shall consider Hume's discussion of the respective roles of reasoning ("reason") and desire or passion in conduct. Here I have three tasks: first, to interpret Hume's arguments, secondly, to examine them, and finally, to examine some criticisms of these arguments.

Before I proceed to do this, I find it necessary to discuss briefly Hume's famous distinction between "demonstrative reasonings" and "reasonings concerning matters of fact." This distinction has come to be known as "Hume's Fork."<sup>1</sup> Hume tries to show the respective roles of both these kinds of reasoning in moral actions and in conduct generally. Therefore, for a clear understanding of his arguments about the place of reason in actions and morals this distinction must be carefully noted.

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<sup>1</sup>A. Flew, Hume's Philosophy of Belief, p. 53.

Hume makes the distinction in the Treatise as well as in the Enquiry. In the Treatise, he divides philosophical relations<sup>1</sup> into two kinds: "such as depend entirely on the ideas, which we compare together, and such as may be chang'd without any change in the ideas." (T. 69). The former group consists of resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality, and proportion in quantity and number. These relations are "the objects of knowledge and certainty." (T. 70). However, it is only the relation of proportion in quantity or number of which we can have demonstrative knowledge while the rest fall "more properly under the province of intuition than demonstration" since we can discover them "at first sight." (T. 70). The latter group of relations consists of identity, relations of time and place,

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<sup>1</sup>Hume makes a distinction between what he calls "natural relation" and "philosophical relation". The former consists in an associative connection between ideas; it is something "by which two ideas are connected together in the imagination, and the one naturally introduces the other". A philosophical relation is something in which we compare ideas. The distinction, as Passmore rightly observes, is identical with James's distinction between "connexions between thoughts" and "connexions thought of", except that Hume would not use the word "connexion" as a synonym for relation. (J.A. Passmore, Hume's Intentions, p. 114.) In accordance with this distinction Hume considers resemblance, contiguity in time or space and causality (which are the qualities responsible for association of ideas) to be natural relations. These relations are philosophical relations as well, but there are four other philosophical relations, namely, identity, contrariety, degrees in quality, proportions in quantity and number. (T. 13-14).

and causation. These are the foundations of the empirical sciences. It may be mentioned here that Hume's interest lies mainly in them. The major part of Part III, Book I, entitled "Of Knowledge and Probability", in the Treatise, is devoted to these three relations while only a brief discussion is made of the four relations which give us knowledge and certainty.

While stating the distinction in the Enquiry, Hume has omitted the cumbersome discussion of the two sorts of philosophical relations. Here he speaks merely of the distinction between "relations of ideas" and "matters of fact". Thus he has made the distinction clear in the Enquiry:

All the objects of human reason or enquiry may naturally be divided into two kinds, to wit, Relations of Ideas and Matters of Fact. Of the first kind are the sciences of Geometry, Algebra, and Arithmetic; and, in short, every affirmation which is either intuitively or demonstratively certain...Propositions of this kind are discoverable by the mere operation of thought, without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe.

Matters of fact...are not ascertained in the same manner...The contrary of every matter of fact is still possible; because it can never imply a contradiction, and is conceived by the mind with the same facility and distinction, as if ever so conformable to reality. That the sun will not rise to-morrow is no less intelligible a proposition, and implies no more contradiction than the affirmation, that it will rise. We should in vain, therefore, attempt to demonstrate its falsehood. Were it demonstratively false, it would imply a contradiction, and could never be distinctly conceived by the mind. (E. 25-26).

From the above it is clear that the conclusion of a demonstrative reasoning or reasoning about relations of ideas can be known a priori, i.e., "by the mere operation of thought". It cannot be denied without self-contradiction. Its certainty is maintained by logical necessity. Such certainty can be obtained only in the field of mathematics. On the other hand, we can never be certain about the conclusions of our reasonings concerning matters of fact. The opposite of every matter of fact is conceivable, and hence possible. We can deny any proposition about matters of fact without involving self-contradiction. Logical necessity does not operate here. We know matters of fact a posteriori.

By "reasonings concerning matters of fact" Hume actually means what we call "inductive reasonings" which consist in passing from known cases to the unknown. It regards, as he says, "those relations of objects of which experience only gives us information." A clear statement of this is to be found in the Enquiry:

All reasonings concerning matter of fact seem to be founded on the relation of Cause and Effect. By means of that relation alone we can go beyond the evidence of our memory and the senses...A man finding a watch or any other machine in a desert island, would conclude that there had once been men in that island. All reasonings concerning fact are of the same nature. (E. 26).

It may be noted that Hume maintains here that "All [my underlining] reasonings concerning fact" are of the kind in which we pass from observed cases to a point "beyond the evidence of our memory and senses." This makes it clear that when Hume refers to "reasonings concerning matters of fact" he means inductive inferences. Hume calls this kind of reasoning also by many other names, such as, "reasonings about causes and effects", "reasonings concerning matters of fact and existence", "factual reasonings", "causal reasonings", "probable reasonings", "empirical reasonings", etc. Henceforward, when I use these other epithets, I shall mean, following Hume, inductive reasonings.

It may be remarked that according to Hume for reasoning to be factual it is not enough that its terms should be empirical ones. Having empirical terms alone does not make a piece of reasoning one concerning matters of fact. It is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of reasoning concerning matters of fact. Hume never considers the following type of syllogistic reasoning as factual reasoning: "All men are mortal, Socrates is a man, Therefore Socrates is mortal." And it is curious to note that he does not recognize such inferences as reasonings concerning relations of ideas (demonstrative reasonings) either.

He writes:

It seems to me, that the only objects of the abstract science or of demonstration are quantity and number [my underlining], and that all attempts to extend this more perfect species of knowledge beyond these bounds are mere sophistry and illusion...that where there is no property, there can be no injustice,..is, indeed, nothing but a more imperfect definition. It is the same case with all those pretended syllogistic reasonings [my underlining], which may be found in every other branch of learning, except the sciences of quantity and number; and these may safely, I think, be pronounced the only proper objects of knowledge and demonstration. (E. 163).

Here Hume restricts logical demonstration to the sciences of quantity and number. It may be well to observe a few things here. A distinction may be made between demonstrative reasonings and deductive reasonings on the basis of the epistemological character of their premisses. Apart from being formally valid, demonstrative reasonings have all their premisses as necessarily true. Their premisses can be known a priori. A deductive reasoning need not have such premisses; all that it requires is formal validity, that is, following the rules of inference, etc. in reaching the conclusion from the premisses. Demonstrative reasonings share formal validity with other deductive reasonings, but they have something more: their premisses are true a priori. Now, if this distinction is granted, then Hume may be right in his view that demonstration is possible only when the premisses

of an argument are necessarily true, that "demonstration, if just, admits of no opposite difficulty" (T. 31); but he seems to be mistaken in his contention that such a demonstration is possible only in the sciences of quantity and number. Not only in the quotation in the above paragraph, but also while making the distinction between reasonings concerning relations of ideas and reasonings concerning matters of fact in the Enquiry he explicitly states that demonstrative certainty can be obtained only in "the sciences of Geometry, Algebra, and Arithmetic." (E. 24). In the Treatise, Hume does not consider geometry as a demonstrative science, but he says, as I have already pointed out, that demonstrative knowledge proper (as opposed to intuition) is possible only about "the relation of proportion in quantity and number". (T. 70).

However, it may be seen that by virtue of the meaning of its terms such a proposition as "Blind people cannot see" also is necessarily true. And it is possible to construct a demonstrative argument by using such premisses. For example:

Deaf people cannot hear  
Crippled people cannot run  
Therefore, deaf people cannot hear and  
crippled people cannot run.

Hume has not considered this kind of demonstrative reasoning.



Furthermore, if we accept the above distinction between demonstrative and deductive reasonings, then Hume has not considered deductive reasonings either. His distinction seems to be exclusively between demonstrative reasonings of the mathematical kind and inductive inferences. This is why, we may now see, the syllogistic reasonings of the kind mentioned on page 19 has no proper place in Hume's philosophy.

Let us now turn to Hume's discussion of the respective roles of reasonings (and knowledge or beliefs) and passions in conduct. It must first be noted that Hume has used the word "reason" (and its synonym "understanding") in the present context and also in his discussion of morals in a broader sense than his use of it in his enquiry into the nature and justification of induction. He takes up his discussion of reason and conduct after his sceptical treatment of the problem of induction. In his treatment of induction, the model of reason is that of a faculty responsible for making demonstrative reasonings only while he shows that inductive reasonings fall short of demonstrative certainty. Now, in his discussion of the place of reason in conduct and morals, "reason" or "understanding" includes both demonstrative reasonings and inductive reasonings. (T. 413,463). This often surprises Hume's readers and subjects him to un-

favourable criticisms. But let us note that the change in the meaning of "reason" in the present context does not affect Hume's arguments. His arguments are designed to show that neither demonstrative nor inductive reasoning (neither knowledge nor belief) alone can be a motive or cause of action, and that a desire is the immediate cause of action; hence "reason" alone cannot be a motive to action.

Hume's arguments about reason and conduct are directed primarily against the rationalists who maintained that we can and ought to be guided by a faculty of reason.<sup>1</sup> Hume puts the

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<sup>1</sup>It may not be improper to give a brief historical note. Hume says that "on this [rationalist] method of thinking the greatest part of moral philosophy, ancient and modern, seems to be founded." (T. 413). Among the ancient philosophers to whom Hume is referring here are perhaps Socrates who said that virtue was knowledge, Plato who thought of justice as a harmony of the passions and desires under reason, and Aristotle who, despite his acknowledgement that understanding moves nothing, talked about "practical understanding", that is, directing the desire to what reason pronounces as good. Notable amongst the philosophers of Hume's time who maintained similar views were Cudworth, Clarke, and Wollaston. Clarke, for instance, said: "For originally and in reality tis as natural and (morally speaking) necessary, that the will should be determined in every action by the reason of the thing, and the right of the case...", and that it is "reason" which apprehends the rightness of an action. (Discourse Concerning the Unchanging Obligations of Natural Religion, Selby-Bigge edition, vol. II, pp. 13-16).

rationalists' view as follows:

Nothing is more usual in philosophy, and even in common life, than to talk of the combat of passion and reason, to give the preference to reason, and to assert that men are only so far virtuous as they conform themselves to its dictates. Every rational creature, 'tis said, is oblig'd to regulate his actions by reason... (T. 413).

This rationalist view implies that reason can cause or motivate actions. Against this Hume presents his theses: "first, that reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will; and secondly, that it can never oppose passion in the direction of the will." (T. 413). Hume's arguments here are very important, because, as we shall see in Chapter VII, the conclusion which he derives here has been used in support of his further thesis about the place of reason in moral judgments.

From what has been said above it may be seen that the problem with which Hume is concerned here is whether reason (more precisely, reasonings and beliefs) can cause action, and not the problem of whether actions can be justified by reasons. Hume thinks that if he can show that reason alone cannot cause actions then the rationalist thesis that reason can and ought to guide action would be disproved. Hume's selection of the place in the Treatise to discuss the issue is an appropriate one, because in the previous two chapters he has been discussing the problem of liberty and necessity. There he has established,

or at least he thinks he has established, that all actions are caused, and that from experience we can see that our actions have a constant union with our motives, tempers and circumstances. It is only natural for him now to discuss the nature of such motives. One thing which he tries to establish here is that reason is not one such motive. It is very important to remember that his arguments always refer to what he calls "actions of the will" (T. 412) by which he means voluntary actions which have an end in view.

I shall take Hume's arguments mainly from his Treatise where in the section "Of the Influencing Motives of the Will" he presents them elaborately. But it should be noted that his view of the relation between reason and conduct has been the same in his Enquiry as well. Thus, he remarks in the Enquiry: "Reason being cool and disengaged is no motive to action, and directs only the appetite or inclination by showing us the means of attaining happiness or avoiding misery." (E. 294).

First Hume presents his argument that demonstrative reasoning alone cannot cause actions. The argument is contained in a brief paragraph:

I believe it scarce will be asserted, that the first species of reasoning [demonstrative reasoning] alone is ever the cause of any action. As its proper province is the world of ideas, and as the will always

places us in that of realities, demonstration and volition seem, upon that account, to be totally remov'd, from each other. Mathematics, indeed are useful in all mechanical operations, and arithmetic in almost every art and profession: But 'tis not of themselves they have any influence. Mechanics are the art of, regulating the motions of bodies to some design'd end or purpose; and the reason why we employ arithmetic in fixing the proportions of numbers, is only that we may discover the proportions of their influence and operation. A merchant is desirous of knowing the sum total of his accounts with any person: Why? but that he may learn what sum will have the same effects in paying his debt, and going to market, as all the particular articles taken together. Abstract or demonstrative reasoning, therefore, never influences any of our actions, but only as it directs our judgment concerning causes and effects; which leads us to the second operation of the understanding. (T. 413-414).

Here Hume first reiterates his claim that demonstrative reasonings are exclusively concerned with abstract relations of ideas, and hence that, of themselves they cannot influence conduct, because conduct is concerned with empirically observable entities. As I said earlier, by "demonstrative reasoning" Hume means that concerning "relation of proportion in quantity or number", that is, mathematical calculations. Here, too, the notion of demonstrative reasoning remains the same. The example which Hume chooses here supports this. In view of this, Kydd's view<sup>1</sup> that "Hume is here referring to all ordinary a priori judgements", such as, "Deaf men cannot overhear what is said," "Fierce dogs are apt to bite", seems very doubtful.

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<sup>1</sup>R. Kydd, Reason and Conduct in Hume's Treatise, p. 62.

The second phase of Hume's argument consists in showing the role which demonstrative reasoning plays in conduct. His view is that there is a place for such reasonings in conduct, but that it lies in assisting the second type of reasoning in whatever role the latter plays in conduct. In mechanics demonstrative reasoning can be applied to talk about the empirical world. Moreover, a merchant may use his knowledge of mathematics for balancing his accounts. But in such cases, Hume argues, demonstrative reasoning is applied only for the purpose of guiding our judgments of cause and effect or our inductive inferences. In the case of a merchant calculating the amount of his debt for example, it is his judgment of cause and effect which is being directed by such calculations. Let me explain exactly how it happens. In this I shall have to anticipate much of what Hume says about the place of inductive reasoning in conduct. The merchant wants to pay his debt, let us say, for the end of maintaining good business. Here the merchant has a desire (the desire to maintain good business) and he reasons about cause and effect (paying debts causes good business). But he does not know the amount of his debt, and without knowing this his reasoning of cause and effect is not useful. It is just here that demonstrative reasoning plays its role. It is obvious that the role is indirect. It consists in its assisting the other kind of reasoning. It is also clear that such rea-

sonings do not by themselves cause action. Let us change the example a bit. Suppose that an expert accountant shows that the merchant's calculation, say an amount of \$5500, is wrong, the correct amount being \$5005. He now pays the latter amount in place of the former. A different action now takes place. So, as the demonstrative reasoning "varies" the merchant's action "takes a subsequent variation". (Hume has not actually said this in connection with demonstrative reasoning but only in connection with the other type of reasoning. But to clarify his position it is perhaps as well to point out all this.) Now, it may even be said that demonstrative reasoning in the aid of causal reasoning may alter the agent's desire. For instance, if calculation shows our merchant that his debt is a huge amount which he cannot possibly pay, then he may desire to flee from his country. This might seem to conflict with Hume's further view that reason is inert and hence cannot arouse a passion. However, this need not worry Hume. He may point out that even in such a case the desire is caused by an idea of a state of affairs which may be brought before the mind by causal reasoning aided by mathematical calculations. I shall return to a similar point later. (See below pp. 39 - 41.) In any case, here Hume may certainly defend himself by pointing out that the direct cause of the action in such a case is a desire, namely, the desire to flee from the country. The main

point is that the ultimate cause of the agent's action is always his desire, and the role of reasoning consists in its being used by its possessor to gain some independently determined end.

I think that there is nothing wrong with Hume's account of the role of demonstrative reasoning in conduct, as I have elucidated it above. If the nature of these reasonings is such that they consist only in making mathematical calculations, then by themselves they cannot cause actions. But it must be noted that Hume does not deny such reasonings any role in conduct. They have a place in conduct, but only in so far as they assist empirical reasonings about cause and effect. The place of reason in conduct is therefore to be understood in the light of whatever we may discover about the relation of the second kind of reasoning to conduct. This is why Hume's discussion of the role of demonstrative reasoning in conduct is so brief and the main burden of the enquiry centres around empirical reasoning and conduct. In the following four chapters I shall consider Hume's discussion of empirical reasoning and conduct. It will be necessary to give a proper interpretation of some of Hume's statements which he makes in this connection. I shall also try to defend Hume's main arguments against certain criticisms.



## III

THE PLACE OF REASONING CONCERNING MATTERS  
OF FACT IN CONDUCT

At the outset it may be well to observe the main points which Hume tries to establish in his enquiry into the role of reasoning concerning matters of fact in conduct. These are as follows: (1) Empirical reasonings and beliefs by themselves do not cause actions. (2) A desire is the ultimate cause of an action. (3) But reasonings and beliefs can guide desires in two ways. (4) The terms "reasonable" and "unreasonable" are not properly applicable to conduct; their use is non-evaluative. They are to be used for only those things which can be true or false. (5) There cannot be any conflict between our reasonings and beliefs on the one hand, and our desires on the other, in the causation of actions. (6) Finally he points out a misuse of the term "reason", that is, when we mistake our being motivated by certain desires or "calm passions" as our being motivated by reasoning or reflection. These and a few other things which Hume has casually mentioned will constitute the subject-matter of the rest of this part of my thesis.

Hume's argument for the conclusions that empirical reasoning by itself does not cause actions and that a desire is the direct

cause of action, is contained in the following passage:

'Tis obvious that when we have the prospect of pain or pleasure from any object, we feel a consequent emotion of aversion or propensity, and are carry'd to avoid or embrace what will give us this uneasiness or satisfaction. 'Tis also obvious, that this emotion rests not here, but making us cast our view on every side, comprehends whatever objects are connected with its original one by the relation of cause and effect. Here then the reasoning takes place to discover this relation, and according as our reasoning varies, our actions receive a subsequent variation. But 'tis evident in this case, that the impulse arises not from reason, but is only directed by it. 'Tis from the prospect of pain or pleasure that the aversion or propensity arises towards any object: And these emotions extend themselves to the causes and effects of that object, as they are pointed out to us by reason and experience. It can never in the least concern us to know, that such objects are causes, and such others effects, if both the causes and effects be indifferent to us. Where the objects themselves do not affect us, their connexion can never give them any influence; and 'tis plain, that as reason is nothing but the discovery of this connexion, it cannot by its means that the objects are able to affect us. (T. 414).

Hume's account of how actions take place, as given here, is as follows. A prospect of pleasure or pain from some object gives rise to a desire or aversion in the agent. The agent then uses his reasoning concerning cause and effect to gain or avert the object. His action follows.

It must first be said that Hume has unnecessarily given a hedonistic touch to his account of action as following from a desire or passion. Hume is not a psychological hedonist. I shall try to prove this elsewhere. (See pp.180-184.below.)

Here let us note that Hume's main point in this argument is that unless there is a desire for or aversion from some object, the agent's expectation of pleasure or pain or any other thing, however rational it may be, will not lead him to action. Since a desire must always be there to cause action, reasoning by itself cannot cause action.

It is difficult to say whether Hume thought that in this argument he was making a logical or an empirical point. One may guess from his use of the word "prove" in "...I shall endeavour to prove first, that reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will..."<sup>1</sup> that he perhaps thought that he was making a logical point. And a casual glance at the last two sentences of the above quoted passage may give the impression that he was giving a deductive argument here. The agent will not be interested in knowing that A causes B unless he has a desire for B. Or, even if he knows that A causes B he will not do A unless he desires B. Let us consider the argument more closely.

- (1) The agent believes that doing A is a means to bringing about B.
- (2) The agent desires B.
- (3) The agent desires to do A.
- (4) The agent does A.

Hume's point is that (1) can be true and (2), (3) and (4) may all

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<sup>1</sup>See also Treatise p. 457: "...reason alone, as we have already prov'd, can never [produce or prevent actions]." (My underlining)

be false. But (4) cannot be true when (3) is false unless the action is involuntary (say, inadvertent).<sup>1</sup> It cannot be the case that the agent does A but does not desire to do A.

It seems that, strictly speaking, Hume has not proved his point but only has assumed it throughout his discussion. "Empirical reasoning alone cannot cause action, because without a desire preceding the action, the action cannot occur" - here if the point to be established is that without a desire preceding an action, the action cannot occur, then it has only been taken for granted.

Hume's theory of causal inference and his notion of "desire" create certain difficulties in his view that a desire is the cause of an action. Let us note ~~these~~ difficulties and try to see if these can be avoided. According to Hume, to make a causal inference from one event to another event, a constant conjunction between them must be repeatedly experienced. But we cannot experience other people's desires. How can we then say that other people's actions are caused by desires? And can we experience our own desires? These kinds of consideration, particularly the second one, lead to a difficulty pointed out by

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<sup>1</sup>As I pointed out earlier, Hume's arguments relate only to voluntary actions which have an end in view or what he calls "actions of the will."

Ryle. Ryle maintains that explanations in terms of desires are explanations by motives.<sup>1</sup> Motives, according to him, are not occurrences but tendencies or dispositions.<sup>2</sup> Desires (motives) cannot be felt like twinges or aches, so that, for example, one cannot tell whether one feels them "in the small of his back or in his forehead." But all causes are occurrences. Therefore, desires (motives) are not causes. Just as "when we say that the glass broke because it was brittle, the 'because' clause does not report any happening or a cause; it states a law-like proposition"<sup>3</sup>, so also "the imputation of a motive [desire] for a particular action is not a causal inference to an unwitnessed event but the subsumption of an episode proposition under a law-like proposition."<sup>4</sup>

It is true that one may be easily misled by Hume's talk about desires or aversions or propensities as some kind of feelings which we may feel as we feel pangs or aches: "we feel [an] emotion of aversion or propensity" (T. 414). Talking about desires in this manner may easily give the impression that they are episodes, i.e. which occur at a time. Consequently, it might be objected to Hume that they are not such episodes. It is

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<sup>1</sup>G. Ryle, The Concept of Mind, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p. 85.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p. 89.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. p. 90.

also true that if we take "cause" only in the sense of "event" and if desires are thought to be tendencies, then Ryle's criticism cannot be avoided.

However, it seems to me that there is nothing essentially wrong with Hume's view that a desire is the immediate cause of an action, though his notions of "cause" and "desire" need to be altered, which can be legitimately done. To take Ryle's example of the brittleness of the glass, it will be granted that there must be some molecular structure which accounts for brittleness. Similarly, it is quite sensible to say that there must be some state of the agent which accounts for a mental disposition. We may identify this state with a desire.<sup>1</sup> This is indeed not quite the way in which Hume (wrongly) thinks of a desire. Now, such a state may be said to be a cause of an action in the same way as the molecular structure may be said to be the cause of glass shattering. Here we are no doubt using a different sense of "cause" from that in which an event (for example, a stimulus to a person or a stone hitting the glass) is a cause. But this is

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<sup>1</sup>Hume shows a proneness to this notion of desire in his description of calm desires or passions, but unfortunately his examples of such desires again take him away. His description of such desires may however be noted: "there are certain calm desires and tendencies, which tho' they be real passions, produce little emotion in the mind, and are more known by their effects than by the immediate feeling or sensation." (T. 417).

still a perfectly natural sense of "cause".<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, so long as we restrict ourselves to Hume's account of causal inference and his notion of desires as some kind of mental episodes, it is impossible to establish logically that a desire must be the cause of an action. This difficulty arises because according to his account of causal inference, the relation between a cause and an effect cannot be logically ascertained. However, what Hume does not notice is that the very kind of action which he is trying to explain, namely, voluntary actions or what he calls "actions of the will" or, in our modern terminology, "motivated actions" have the concept of "being caused by a desire or motive" built into them. Furthermore, we can legitimately accept a notion of "cause" like the one which I have mentioned in the preceding paragraph. We can now see that the statement that "a desire is the cause of an action" is a necessary truth if "being caused by a desire" is built into the notion of an action (so that behaviour not caused by a desire, such as hiccup, would not count as an action). We may also note that if "desires cause actions" is necessary, it is still highly plausible that there must be some contingent truths of the form

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<sup>1</sup>Such an account of desires as causes of actions may be found in Armstrong. As he says, "When I have a desire to go out and have a drink I am in a certain mental state, (as distinct from a process or event), a state that is apt for initiating and sustaining a certain line of conduct: the whole process of going out and getting a drink." (D.M. Armstrong, A Materialist Theory of the Mind, p. 152.)

"states of a person of a certain sort A cause pieces of behaviour of a certain sort B." (Just as it is a necessary truth that my mother conceived me, but not a necessary truth that a woman born in Netrakona conceived a man born in Wymensing.)

Hume says that "where the objects themselves do not affect us, their connexion can never give them any influence", i.e., if I do not desire B then I will not be interested in knowing that A causes B. It might be objected that sometimes we are concerned with knowledge for its own sake (that is, knowledge as an end in itself and not as a means to some other end). But even such a case cannot refute the premiss that reasoning alone cannot cause an action. Clearly, in cases like this there is a desire for knowledge. When I do my lessons of symbolic logic or when a scientist tries to isolate a gene just for the love of such a pursuit, we surely have a state of mind apt to lead us to such actions. And, we are still using knowledge or are pursuing knowledge for something, i.e., for pleasure. There is an almost similar case presented in the Enquiry on p. 293. The agent likes to possess health or money for the sake of pleasure. We may note here that such an account does not make Hume a psychological hedonist, because he does not deny that an agent can act for the sake of something other than pleasure. Someone who says that sometimes agents can act for the sake of pleasure or to avoid pain



does not thereby become a psychological hedonist. To be a psychological hedonist one has to maintain that it is only pleasure and pain which motivate agents, or, as it is often expressed, "pleasure and pleasure alone is desired as an end."

From what I have said above, I think, we may accept Hume's view that reasoning alone cannot cause an action and a desire is necessary as its cause, although we have to derive this view of Hume's from the non-Humean notions of "desire" and "cause" which I have indicated, and carefully consider the notion of "voluntary action". Hence, in my discussion of Hume's arguments on the "combat of reason and passion" and his treatment of the place of reason in morals, where he uses this premiss, I shall not question it.

It should be clear from my discussion that Hume has recognized a role of reasoning (and belief) in conduct, but that it consists in influencing conduct indirectly. An empirical reasoning about causes and effects or a belief about means and ends (derived from an empirical reasoning), in Hume's model of causation of actions, is at least a part cause. It plays its role once the agent has the desire to which it is relevant. Reasonings and beliefs by themselves do not motivate; by themselves they are "inert"; but they do determine how the desire, which motivates, is to initiate and sustain a certain line of conduct. In his eagerness to refute the rationalists, sometimes Hume expresses himself as if, according to him, reason is

only "inert" and cannot be considered as a cause of actions. Also, his faculty talk about reason is partly responsible for this. But one should not be misguided by such misleading expressions of Hume. It is obvious from my discussion that reasonings and beliefs are causes which go hand in hand with desires in causing actions. Unless desires are guided by reasons in some manner we do not have actions proper, i.e., voluntary actions which have an end in view. And this is the kind of action which Hume all along tries to explain by his explanatory model.

Now, many writers on Hume give the impression that he thinks that the reasonings which play some role in conduct are all of the means-end type. But this is not true. Hume has also included judgments about existence of objects in his account of the reasonings which have a place in conduct. He says that a passion may be excited by the information supplied by such reasonings about the existence of objects, and a passion may be directed by the information supplied by such reasonings about means and ends. (T. 416, 459). However, this does not create any difficulty. As I have said, by "reasoning concerning matters of fact and existence" Hume really means "inductive reasoning", and such reasonings can inform us not only about means to ends but also about the existence of objects.

There may seem to be one difficulty in Hume's description of the influence on conduct of judgments about the existence of objects.

He has said that passions or desires may be "founded on", i.e., excited or caused by such judgments. It may be thought that this conflicts with Hume's other view that reasoning alone cannot cause desire and action. The problem does not arise in the case of reasoning about means and ends, since it is clear that what Hume means in this case is that our desire for the end is extended to include the desire for the means. So there was already a desire which is now extended to the means through a judgment of means-end type. But in the case of the influence on conduct of judgments about existence of objects the very first desire seems to be prompted by reasoning. However, a close examination of what Hume means here will remove the difficulty.<sup>1</sup> A passion, according to Hume, is what he calls an "impression of reflection". He says:

[The impression of reflection] is derived in a great measure from our ideas, and that in the following order. An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain of some kind or other. Of this impression a copy is taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea. This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impressions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflection, because derived from it. (T. 7-8).

So it is the idea of something<sup>2</sup> which gives rise to a passion or desire. Now we may consider Hume's point in this way: a judgment about the existence of an object may bring before the mind an idea or

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<sup>1</sup>Here I am indebted to Kydd's work. Kydd, op. cit., pp. 103-107.

<sup>2</sup>Hume has again unnecessarily leaned towards a hedonistic account

copy of something which in its turn produces a new impression of desire or aversion. Therefore, the direct cause of a desire or aversion is not a judgment but an idea. We can then say that there is no conflict between Hume's two views that reasoning alone cannot cause desire and action and that a desire or passion may be "founded on" judgments about the existence of objects.

It seems, therefore, that Hume has an explanation of the causation of desires for means, and it is consistent with his general theory about the role of reasoning and desire in conduct. We may now ask for his view of the origin of desires for ultimate ends as against preliminary ends or means. How do these desires originate? From my discussion (and also Enquiry, p. 293), it is obvious that Hume does make the distinction between ends and means, or that between ultimate ends and preliminary ends. The passage which I have quoted (above p. 31) shows that "a prospect of pain or pleasure" causes such desires. Also, on p. 438 of the Treatise, Hume says that the passions are "founded on pain and pleasure". But to obtain Hume's complete account of the cause of such desires we must also note other passages which are free from this leaning towards psychological hedonism. Thus on p. 417 of the Treatise he says that there are certain calm desires which are of two kinds; some of them are "certain instincts originally implanted in our nature", and the other

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of desire and action by saying that it is "the idea of pleasure or pain" which "returns upon the soul" and produces desire. See below pp. 180-184.

is "the general appetite to good [pleasure], and aversion to evil [pain], consider'd merely as such." He again recognizes that most of these desires arise "from a natural impulse or instinct, which is perfectly unaccountable". (T. 439). It cannot be denied that Hume's talk about instincts here is laden with obscurity. However, I think that this merely indicates that he is not willing to probe any further into the question of the origination of desires for ultimate ends.

From what I have said above it is clear that Hume has assigned reasonings, judgments and beliefs a place in conduct. Reasonings resulting in a judgment or a belief about means to an end or about the existence of an object may influence our conduct indirectly.

Judgments and beliefs may thus accompany our desires and actions. It is here that we are to understand Hume's distinction between reasonable and unreasonable actions and passions. The distinction consists in the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the judgments and beliefs which accompany passions and actions and not in the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the actions and passions themselves. Here is what he says:

...passions can be contrary to reason only so far as they are accompany'd with some judgment or opinion. According to this principle, which is so obvious and natural, 'tis only in two senses, that any affection can be call'd unreasonable. First, When a passion, such as hope or fear, grief or joy, despair or security, is founded on the supposition of the existence of objects, which really do not exist. Secondly, When in exerting any passion in action, we chuse means insufficient for the design'd end, and deceive ourselves in our judgment of causes and effects. Where a passion is neither founded on false

suppositions, nor chuses means insufficient for the end, the understanding can neither justify nor condemn it...In short, a passion must be accompany'd with some false judgment, in order to its being unreasonable; and even then 'tis not the passion, properly speaking, which is unreasonable, but the judgment. (T. 416).

In another place also, Hume states the same point by means of some examples:

A person may be affected with passion, by supposing a pain or pleasure to lie in an object, which has no tendency to produce either of these sensations, or which produces the contrary to what is imagin'd. A person may also take false measures for the attaining his end, and may retard, by his foolish conduct, instead of forwarding the execution of any project. These false judgments may be thought to affect the passions and actions, which are connected with them, and may be said to render them unreasonable, in a figurative and improper way of speaking...A fruit, for instance, that is really disagreeable, appears to me at a distance, and thro' mistake I fancy it to be pleasant and delicious. Here is one error. I choose means of reaching this fruit, which are not proper for my end. Here is a second error; nor is there any third one, which can possibly enter into our reasonings concerning actions. (T. 459-460).

Thus, it is only in "a figurative and improper way of speaking" that we may say that an action or passion is reasonable, namely, when it is accompanied by a reasonable "judgment" or "supposition". But strictly and philosophically speaking, it is the judgment or the supposition which is reasonable and not the passion or action. In his discussion of morals, Hume clearly says, "Actions may be laudable or blameable; but they cannot be reasonable or unreasonable." (T. 458).

Considering the importance of this claim of Hume for my entire discussion I wish to dwell on it at a certain length. In what

follows I shall anticipate a few things about Hume's view on the relationship between reason and morals which I shall discuss elaborately in the second part of the thesis.

Let us first note why in the present context Hume maintains that a passion or an action cannot be reasonable or unreasonable, and why he insists that only such things as judgments and suppositions are reasonable or unreasonable. The answer is simple. Hume has assimilated "reasonable" and "unreasonable" to "true" and "false" respectively; and, according to him, passions and actions cannot be true or false whereas only judgments and suppositions can be true or false.

A passion is what Hume calls "an original existence" in the sense that it does not refer to anything. But, according to Hume, unless something, x, refers to something, y, x cannot be true or false. Truth and falsehood, conformity or contradiction of something with something else, according to Hume, always requires two terms. "...contradiction consists in the disagreement of ideas, consider'd as copies, with those objects, which they represent." (T. 415). Therefore, a passion is neither true nor false.<sup>1</sup> And, as I have said, according to Hume, that which can be true or false deserves to be called "reasonable" or "unreasonable" if we wish to talk strictly and

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<sup>1</sup>Hume's view of truth and falsehood is confusing. But there are other reasons for which we cannot use the notion of truth and falsehood for passions and actions in the way in which we can use it for judgments

philosophically. A passion, therefore, is not reasonable or unreasonable. The same is true about actions. Hume does not elaborate this point in respect of actions. But he argues that actions, like passions, cannot be true or false because they are "original facts." (T. 458). Therefore, (he means) actions, like passions, are not reasonable or unreasonable.

It is necessary here to consider what Hume would say about the reasonableness or unreasonableness of beliefs. According to him, any mental state, a belief no less than an action or passion, would be an "original existence". So the mental state of believing something is an original existence and hence cannot be true or false, reasonable or unreasonable. But "belief" is an ambiguous word. Hume himself came to realize this. He made a distinction between the "idea" and the "manner of our conceiving it" (Treatise, Book I, Part III, Section VII), a distinction which roughly corresponds to what we would regard as that between "that what is believed in" and "the mental state of believing". Now, though according to Hume, a mental state (in being "non-representative") cannot be true or false, yet "that what is believed in", "that something is the case", a judgment, can be true or false. So I think that Hume would grant that "belief" is reasonable or unreasonable when the word refers

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and beliefs. I shall indicate some of these reasons later in this chapter.



not to a mental state but to that which is believed. Henceforward, when I shall say that according to Hume a belief is reasonable or unreasonable, the word "belief" will refer to "that which is believed".

Now, Hume expresses his view that actions and passions cannot be reasonable or unreasonable because they cannot be true or false, in the form of some paradoxes which shock his critics even today. He says:

'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger. 'Tis not contrary to reason for me to chuse my total ruin, to prevent the least uneasiness of an Indian or person wholly unknown to me. (T.416).

It should be noted that here Hume is not really quarrelling over such a minor point as the question how in English or in any other language such terms as "reasonable", "unreasonable", "in accordance with reason", "contrary to reason", etc. should be used.<sup>1</sup> If, as he maintains, strictly and philosophically speaking, these terms are applicable only to judgments and beliefs, then an action or a passion cannot properly be called "reasonable" or "unreasonable".

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<sup>1</sup>Note in this connection how Reid missed Hume's point. Reid criticized Hume as follows: "To act reasonably, is a phrase no less common in all languages, than to judge reasonably. We immediately approve of a man's conduct, when it appears that he had good reason for what he did. And every action we disapprove, we think unreasonable, or contrary to reason. A way of speaking so universal among men, common to the learned and unlearned in all nations and in all languages, must have a meaning. To suppose it to be words without meaning, is to treat, with undue contempt, the common sense of mankind." (T. Reid, Works, Vol. II, p. 579.)

Consequently, an action like destroying the whole world in preference to the scratching of one's finger is neither reasonable nor unreasonable. But if a judgment accompanies such actions - judgment about means and ends or about the existence of objects - then these adjectives may indirectly be applied to the actions. It is only by an extension of these terms, i.e., in an oblique manner or in "a figurative and improper way of speaking" that an action or a passion may be called "reasonable" or "unreasonable". Hume would insist that we must bear all this in mind if we wish to talk "strictly and philosophically".

In the light of the above discussion we may now see that in the present context Hume's use of the words "reasonable" and "unreasonable" is non-evaluative. To use "reasonable" and "unreasonable" for "true" and "false" is not to use them evaluatively. When we say that "X is true", we do not evaluate X in the way in which we evaluate it when we say "X is good" or "X is beautiful". (Tarski's definition of "truth" and the semantic definition of "valid quantificational schema", for example, are not evaluative in the way in which literary criticism is. "Truth, Beauty and Goodness" make up a very ill assorted trio!)

Now, there are a few problems about Hume's assimilation of "reasonable" and "unreasonable" to "true" and "false" respectively, which I must consider here. The first problem is this. In the

present context, the things which Hume calls "reasonable" or "unreasonable" are true or false judgments and beliefs. On the other hand, in his philosophy the epithets "reasonable" and "unreasonable" are, at least apparently, tied up with his notion of the faculty of reason. Often enough he takes "reasonable" and "unreasonable" as synonymous with "conformable to reason" and "contrary to reason" respectively. (See for example pp. 416, 458 of the Treatise.)

The adjectives "reasonable" and "unreasonable" are thus connected with the noun "reason". If we consider his assimilation of "reasonable" and "unreasonable" to "true" and "false" on the one hand, and his linking of these epithets with his notion of reason as a faculty on the other, then Hume's intention seems to be that he wants to regard judgments as well as reasonings as reasonable or unreasonable. Here he is referring not only to demonstrative reasonings but also to inductive ones: in his discussion of actions and morals he considers both of these to be the products of reason. (T. 413, 463).

It may of course be said that there is an obvious inconsistency between his view here of inductive inferences as the products of reason or as reasonable and his sceptical discussions of inductive inferences in which he does not even consider them as reasonings proper but merely as "a species of sensation" and as due to customs or habits (T. 103, also see E. 32, 41, 42-43, 54). On other occasions, too, against his own scepticism he maintains that there is such a thing as reasonably or justifiably holding a belief:

"A hundred instances or experiments on one side, and fifty on another, afford a doubtful expectation of any event; though a hundred uniform experiments, with only one that is contradictory, reasonably beget a pretty strong degree of assurance."(E. 111, my underlining. See also E. 110, T. 225-226). However, since my primary concern here is Hume's philosophy of action and morals I do not intend to occupy myself with this inconsistency between his epistemology and his philosophy of action and morals, and which is present even within his epistemology itself. The present problem is that if Hume intends to regard judgments and beliefs as well as reasonings (demonstrative and inductive) as reasonable or unreasonable, then this seems to be in conflict with his argument that actions and passions are not reasonable or unreasonable because they are not true or false. For one may now point out that a reasoning (demonstrative or inductive) is not true or false either; how then can a reasoning be reasonable or unreasonable? How can Hume conclude that actions and passions are not reasonable or unreasonable, when he admits that other things, namely reasonings, are reasonable or unreasonable in spite of not being true or false? What can Hume say against this objection?

I think that Hume would not have much difficulty in replying to this objection. All he would have to do is to ~~show~~ show the close connection of the notions of demonstrative validity and inductive

validity with truth and falsehood, a connection which does not exist between actions or passions on the one hand and truth and falsehood on the other. Demonstrative validity may be defined in terms of truth and falsity as follows: an argument is valid if and only if all arguments of the same form as it are such that they never have true premisses and false conclusions. And, as Hume in the present context intends to regard inductive arguments as reasonable, he is now in effect maintaining that there is such a thing as inductively valid argument. Therefore, he could now talk about inductive validity and define it in terms of truth and falsity in the following manner: a form of argument is inductively valid if and only if arguments of the same form usually lead from truths to truths and not from truths to falsehoods. But it must be noted that he can avoid the problem at hand in the above manner only at the cost of admitting an inconsistency between the view expressed in his epistemology and that expressed in his discussion of actions and morals, between what he says about probable or inductive reasonings when he discusses it in detail and what he now says about it.

Hume's linking of "reasonable" and "unreasonable" with his notion of the faculty of reason is indeed unfortunate. As I tried to show in the first chapter, the talk about the faculty of reason is muddled. Hence Hume's connecting of those epithets with his notion of the faculty of reason is equally muddled. However, in view of the close

connection of the two kinds of reasonings with truth and falsehood Hume could apply those epithets to them. And it seems to me that Hume could easily have ignored the supposed connection between those epithets and his notion of the faculty of reason had he come to realize the muddle involved in his faculty talk. He could easily have ignored this connection because his actual use of those epithets does not depend on his faculty talk. It, in fact, depends on his view of truth and falsehood. So if he had ignored that supposed connection, it would not have adversely affected his view about the application of those epithets. It would rather make his account clear.

Now let me take up the second problem which, again, I think, would not put Hume into much difficulty. (Because of what I have said about the close connection between "reasonable judgments and beliefs as those which have been arrived at by reasonable methods" on the one hand and "reasonable judgments and beliefs which are true" on the other.) Let me present the problem. It may be said that even if we use "reasonable" and "unreasonable" only for judgments and beliefs, "reasonable judgments and beliefs" is not synonymous with "true judgments and beliefs". We call judgments and beliefs "reasonable" when they are arrived at by such methods as are considered to be reasonable even though the judgments and the beliefs may eventually turn out to be false. A scientist by following his

methods may come to believe that memory transplantation in the human subjects is possible, but this may turn out to be false. Or, I may believe that my wife will cook my dinner this evening because she has done this every evening, but my belief may turn out to be false; she might catch a cold. On the other hand, by clairvoyance someone might have come to believe that the Australian Cricket team would lose against the South Africans in all four test matches of 1970, a belief which most surprisingly turned out to be true. Or, by tossing a coin I may come to believe that the Pakistan Muslim League Party will be defeated in the election of 1970, a belief which might very well turn out to be true. Considering the use of "reasonable" and "unreasonable" in this way, i.e., the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the manner in which a judgment or a belief is arrived at, someone might argue that Hume's assimilation of "reasonable" and "unreasonable" to "true" and "false" is muddled. Then it may be said that Hume's conclusion that actions and passions are not reasonable or unreasonable is based on a muddled premiss. It may then be argued that if a belief or a judgment can be reasonable or unreasonable even when it is not true or false, an action or a passion also may be reasonable or unreasonable when it is not true or false.

I think that Hume could reply to this objection in the following manner. His opponent's claim that a belief or a judgment may be

reasonable even when it has not been proved to be true is based on the view that such a reasonable judgment or belief has been arrived at by a reasonable method. Now these methods are claimed by his opponent to be reasonable because they have been found, always or usually, to produce true judgments and beliefs. Thus, the concept of reasonable judgment and belief, even if it is not identical with that of true judgment and belief, has a close connection with truth and falsehood. Hume's objector would perhaps regard those judgments and beliefs as reasonable which are arrived at by demonstrative and inductive reasoning. In that case Hume would show the close connection of demonstrative validity and inductive validity with truth and falsehood in the manner as I have indicated. This would be the same as showing a close connection between the notion of "reasonable judgments and beliefs arrived at by a reasonable method even though they may not turn out to be true" and the notions of "truth" and "falsehood". When this connection has been made out, it would not be difficult for Hume to rehabilitate his argument that actions and passions are not reasonable or unreasonable. He then needs simply to point out that the close connection which beliefs and judgments have with truth and falsehood is not to be found in the case of actions or passions. So, although beliefs and judgments may be reasonable even when they are not true, there is no possibility that actions or passions (which are not the sort of thing that can be true) can be reasonable. Actions and passions do not have that



connection with truth and falsehood which judgments and beliefs have.

It is often said that Hume's notions of "reasonable" and "unreasonable" are arbitrary. In our ordinary usage we very often evaluate actions and passions by applying these words to them. That is, we apply these words directly to actions and passions; we do not use them only for judgments and beliefs. Hume has not shown that there is anything wrong in our standard use of these words. He has merely argued from his own proposed definitions of them. Hence his denial of the use of these words for actions and passions is arbitrary.

Now it must be granted that Hume's use of these epithets is different from our ordinary use of them. And in so far as he has not shown any difficulty in our standard use of them, his use may be said to be arbitrary. But this cannot be a serious criticism of Hume. The question is, even if he has used these words arbitrarily, has he made any fallacious deduction from his use of them? If he has, then that would constitute a serious criticism against him. It seems to me that he has not. Given his restricted sense of these words, it follows that actions and passions are not reasonable or unreasonable. Hume's argument rather helps to clarify the distinction between the theoretical and the practical fields, between things which can be true or false and things which cannot be. The philosophical point (not any verbal issue) raised in his argument con-

cerning the reasonableness or unreasonableness of actions and passions is correct. The point is that desires and emotions as well as actions themselves cannot properly be designated as true or false. This claim may sound boring to many of us who are already well aware of the distinction between the theoretical and the practical fields. Nevertheless Hume should be given credit for his being one of those philosophers who have been most responsible for our present awareness of this important distinction.

I think that there are good reasons to say that the standard use of "reasonable" and "unreasonable" is based on a philosophical confusion. When this confusion is shown, then Hume's conclusion that actions and passions themselves are not reasonable or unreasonable gets some additional support independently of his argument. I propose to show this confusion in detail in the third part of the thesis. But Hume's fault must be noted. It is that he claims that his is the only sense of those terms, and he calls the standard senses of those terms "unphilosophical" without showing any muddle or confusion in the standard senses. One should not call the meaning of a certain word "unphilosophical" and "loose" just because it does not fit his own meaning of that term. Here, indeed, Hume has left a gap in his philosophy. I shall try to fill in this gap in the appropriate place.

Let me now examine a few criticisms of Hume's account of practical

reason. Hume has often been criticized on the ground that his treatment of the relation of reason and conduct fails to account for what is taken to be choice or reasoned choice; and hence his treatment fails to account for deliberate actions. It is alleged that all that Hume has done is to explain actions, both impulsive and deliberate, in terms of their antecedents, i.e., "aversion and propensity". These critics point out that once Hume's notion of reason (that it is essentially theoretical) is accepted, we can find only practical applications of theoretical reason. But, they contend, there is something which can be properly designated as "irreducibly practical reason", which is very different from the application of Hume's theoretical reason. One difficulty with this view is that it is not possible to give a clear account of such a faculty of reason which is responsible for reasoned choice and yet which does not fall under Hume's notion of theoretical reason. When the faculty terminology is purged out then what remains is seen to be either something like Hume's notion of reasons which guide choice, or else something which leads to new difficulties.

To see this, let us consider a notable exposition of this sort of view. Reginald Jackson, in a paper entitled "Practical Reason",<sup>1</sup> maintains that choice can be immediately guided by judgments, and it is

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<sup>1</sup>R. Jackson, "Practical Reason", Philosophy, 1942.

here that the function of practical reason is to be sought. Choice, like judgments, can and must be reasoned. This "faculty of choice" is the faculty of practical reason. He says:

You may be properly asked why you judge that this is the case. With equal propriety you may be asked why you choose to do this. When you are asked why you judge that this is the case, what is demanded is the evidence by which your judgment is guided. When you are asked why you choose to do this, what is demanded is not evidence. But what is demanded is the reason by which your choice is guided. There can be no evidence for doing this. There can be a reason for doing this. It is possible no doubt to act without reason. But it is just here that deliberate action differs from impulsive action. Only where what is done is done for a reason, whether sound or unsound, does the agent choose. Choice not only can, choice must, be reasoned.<sup>1</sup>

According to Jackson, there is always a judgment which constitutes the ground of a choice. And the choice is "absolutely reasonable" when not only is it reasoned but also the judgment constituting its ground is sound. In this respect, he maintains, a reasonable choice is analogous to a reasonable inference. As he says:

More is claimed in choosing than that the choice is reasonable relatively to its ground; More is claimed in inferring than that the inference is reasonable relatively to its premiss. The ground or the premiss is itself acknowledged. The agent chooses x, the thinker infers that q, not if, but because p. By satisfying the demand for validity neither qualifies for more than the right to sink or swim with his judgment that p. Only if the choice or inference is valid and if, further, the judgment that p, is knowledge that p, is the choice or inference unassailable - absolutely and not merely relatively reasonable. Where both these conditions are fulfilled, however, choice or inference is absolutely reasonable.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 362.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 363-364.

Jackson also talks about principles of choice, and he identifies principles of valid choice with moral laws. The grounds and the principles of choice are different things; the distinction between them is analogous to that between premisses and principles of inference. As Jackson puts it: "That to enter the legal profession would fulfil my strongest desire is the ground of my choice... The principle of my choice is: x can be validly chosen on the ground that x would fulfil the agent's strongest desire."<sup>1</sup>

The first question which I must ask is how different is Jackson's view of practical reason from Hume's account of the same? Jackson says that the "immediate guidance of choice by judgment is the sole function of practical reason." What sort of judgment is this? The example which we find in his account, i.e., "to enter the legal profession would fulfil my strongest desire", is clearly a means-end type of judgment. In this case it should be noted that the "passion which is guided" by the above means-end type of judgment is a second-order desire, i.e., the desire to fulfil the strongest desire. Hume has never denied that there can be such desires which may be guided by empirical judgments about means to ends in the causation of actions. An admission of such desires, acting as immediate causes of actions, would be quite consistent with his general view that a desire is the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 364-365.

direct cause of an action. The important thing to notice here is that Hume has admitted that the above kind of judgment about means to ends (i.e., to enter the legal profession would fulfil my strongest desire) can influence our choice. Not only that Hume has not denied such judgments a place in the determination of our choice and voluntary actions, but also he has said that as soon as such judgments are made, they automatically influence our course of action (see below Chapter V). "...according as our reasoning varies, our actions receive a subsequent variation." (T. 414). "The moment we perceive the falsehood of any supposition, or the insufficiency of any means, our passions yield to our reason without any opposition." (T. 416). In Hume's philosophy, a choice is caused by a desire of the agent; nevertheless, a reasonable choice is guided by a reasonable judgment about existence of objects of the passions or about means to the agent's end. Judging Jackson's account in the above manner, therefore, it is difficult to see how it differs from that of Hume.

Jackson, however, talks about principles of choice. If the point now is that a reasonable choice depends not only on its being guided by a means-end type of judgment or a judgment about existence of objects of desires, but also on whether it is made in accordance with a reasonable principle of choice, for example, in accordance with a moral law, then it may be observed that the problem of reasonableness is now transferred to another sphere, namely, that of

principles, for example, moral laws. And it should be noticed that Hume's scepticism may now be directed to the new sphere in the form of the question: What principle or principles are reasonable, and why? The answer, I shall try to show, is as difficult as it was in the case of the reasonableness of choice. I shall return to this in the third part of the thesis. Here let me point out one difficulty which is involved in Jackson's view that there is a parallel between "validity of choice" and "validity of inference".

Jackson maintains that choice, like inference, can be valid or invalid. According to him, just as the conclusion of an inference is valid when it is drawn in accordance with the principles of inference, so is a choice valid when it is made in accordance with the principles of choice. But in such a consideration certain questions inevitably arise. First, are principles of choice, such as moral laws, relevantly similar to the principles of inference? Secondly, in what sense is "validity" ascribed to choice (and also actions)? Is it the same as when we talk about the validity of an inference? Principles of choice, however, are not relevantly similar to the principles of inference. A judgment guided by the principles of inference is either true or false. But a choice (or action) guided by a principle of choice (moral law) is neither true nor false. The point is that truth and falsehood are very relevant to the principles of inference whereas this is not so in the case of the principles of

choice. Principles of inference are good ones in that they never lead us from truths to falsehoods, and principles of inductive inference are good if and only if they lead from truths to probably true propositions. But there does not seem to be anything analogous to this in the case of the principles of choice. We must also note that there is a general agreement as to the principles of inference whereas the disagreement about the principles of choice (and actions) is notorious. The important thing is that unless choice (and actions) are true or false in the same way in which conclusions of inferences are, it is surely improper to use "valid" or "invalid" in the same sense for inferences as well as for choice (and actions). By juggling with queer senses of "valid" and "invalid" one cannot do away with the differences between principles of inference and moral laws, between validity of inference and "validity" of choice. Jackson's suggested way of talking would not change the fact that a choice which is "valid" for one person may be "invalid" for another. This is a sort of thing which cannot happen about the validity of inference. Indeed, it is very inappropriate to apply the notion of validity (a logical notion) to choice and actions (ethical concepts) in the way Jackson suggests.

In Jackson's posthumously published paper, "The Moral Problem-The Problem of Conduct" (Mind, 1948), his criticism of Hume and his views on practical reason have remained substantially the same (see especially pp. 442, 457-458). There he maintains that the very



distinction between reasonableness of judgments and reasonableness of conduct is incorrect. The notion of reasonableness applies to conduct as much as it does to judgments. And, he holds that the meaning of "reasonableness" in both cases is the same, just as in the paper "Practical Reason" he maintains that the notion of validity is the same in both cases. He objects to Hume that if he had not made the distinction between reasonable judgment and reasonable conduct then his paradoxes like "It is not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger" would not have arisen. But from what I have said above in my criticism of Jackson it is clear that an action cannot be called "reasonable" in the same sense in which a judgment or an inference is called "reasonable". This is so not only because judgments and actions, inferences and choice are different in their nature, but mainly because the notion of reasonableness, in its logical sense, is inappropriate to choice and actions. The notion of "correct inference" is semantically based through the requirement that a principle of inference should not lead us from truths to falsehoods. (Or in the case of inductive inference from the truth of the premisses to the probable truth of the conclusion.)

I now propose to examine another attempt to apply the words "reasonable" and "unreasonable" to actions themselves and not to

their accompanying judgments. It has been made by J.J.C. Smart.<sup>1</sup> He avoids the issue whether actions are caused by reason, and directs the problem of practical reason to a non-Humean line by asking for reasonableness or justification of conduct. Like Jackson, he also considers a similarity between reasonableness of inferences and of actions. Smart's account has the merit of being free from faculty talk. In fact, it begins with a criticism of such talk. He says:

The dispute about whether Reason can be practical is not merely verbal but trivial, and only appears not to be trivial when we hypostatize this faculty Reason and suppose it to be a thing. It then looks as though our dispute is an empirical one about what this thing Reason can do. The truth is, however, that there is no such thing or agency as Reason. If there were, and if we were quite familiar with it and could recognize it by certain marks, just as we are familiar with and can recognize sulphuric acid or cousin Mary, it would be sensible to inquire what this thing Reason could do: "Can Reason be practical?" would be as sensible an empirical question as "can Mary cook?"<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, while criticizing Hume's faculty talk, (as in the epi-

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<sup>1</sup>J.J.C. Smart, "Reason and Conduct", Philosophy, 1950. From conversation with Professor Smart I learn that he does not now hold the view expressed in this article. His present views are significantly different. However, I take the liberty to examine his paper because, I think, this will illuminate the issues and difficulties involved in this kind of attempt, and will throw further light on the problem of practical reason.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 209.

gram: "Reason is...the slave of passions"), Smart remarks, "Even he [Hume] is not free from the temptations of faculty talk. Let us not be deceived. There is no one in chains: there is no one to be liberated."<sup>1</sup>

In Smart's discussion the question "Can Reason be practical?" gets a new form: "Can practice be reasonable? If so, in what sense?" The answer given to this question is also different from that of Hume. Whereas Hume thinks that a choice or an action is reasonable only when it is accompanied by a reasonable belief, and that, properly speaking, it is the belief and not the choice which is reasonable, Smart thinks that a choice or action is reasonable or right (morally) if it is in accordance with the rules of morals. According to Smart's account, actions become reasonable or unreasonable in a non-derivative sense, that is, an action is directly reasonable or unreasonable. In this sense, Smart maintains, the use of the word "reasonable" in respect of conduct is closely analogous to those in which a deductive or an inductive inference is called "reasonable".

[A deductive inference] is correct or reasonable if it is in accordance with the rules of logic and incorrect or unreasonable if it is not. [An induction] is reasonable or unreasonable in so far as it does or does not proceed in accordance with the rules of inductive method. [A conduct, like keeping

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

of a promise] is right or reasonable if it is in accordance with the rule "Keep promises (unless this conflicts with other rules)," wrong if it is a breach of this rule.<sup>1</sup>

The sense in which a belief is "reasonable" is different; it is so in a derivative sense, which is derivable from that of a reasonable deductive or inductive inference. And, in the same sort of derivative sense, conduct, too, can be reasonable or unreasonable; that is, reasonable conduct is founded on reasonable beliefs, and therefore on reasonable deductive or inductive inferences. (This is Hume's sense of "reasonable actions".) But this sense of "reasonable actions" is very different from the non-derivative sense of "reasonable actions", the sense in which a reasonable action is like a reasonable deductive or inductive inference. In this way Smart separates out the various senses of the systematically ambiguous word "reasonable".

The trouble with Smart's account is that strictly speaking we cannot explain the justification or reasonableness of actions in the same way as we can that of deductive or inductive inferences. And by applying the notion of "reasonableness" directly to actions in the above manner one gets into a new difficulty, a difficulty of the sort which I have indicated while examining Jackson's views.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 213. As Professor Smart tells me, while writing this paper, his notion of validity was syntactically based, not semantically (concerned with truth and falsehood) as he would now suppose it should be.

The similarity between reasonableness of an action and that of a deductive inference or an inductive one (i.e., in the sense of their being in accordance with appropriate rules) strikes Smart so much that he does not seem to be disturbed by the fact that there are disagreements about moral rules, a kind of disagreement which, according to many, does not prevail with regard to logical rules or rules of scientific discovery. He, on the contrary, tries to show that in some sense or other such disagreements about rules are present in the fields of deduction and scientific discovery. However, the important thing to see here is that by pointing out that there are disagreements in the other two fields, just as there are in the field of morals, one will achieve very little, because this procedure will not thereby justify moral rules. The burden of justifying rules will simply be extended from the moral field to the other fields. Unless rules, whether logical or inductive or moral, are justified in some way, their reasonableness will remain questionable. And, in consequence, whatever it is that would be said to be justified by referring to those rules, would be laid on a weak foundation. As a result, Hume's scepticism will remain unshaken, though it will get a new direction.

We should not disagree with Smart's remark that "To say that it is impossible to justify our basic moral rules is not to say that we cannot justify our actions. Actions are justified by reference to

rules..." However, he himself rightly says that those rules "cannot themselves sensibly be said to be justified or not justified (or at least not in the same sort of way)."<sup>1</sup> But the point is, unless the rules themselves are shown to be justified or reasonable, how can we say that the actions done in accordance with them are justified? This sort of justification of an action will be as insecure as tying a boat to a rootless tree. Very likely, many actions and choices, supposedly taken to be reasonable by following the kind of account under consideration, would achieve only a sort of anaemic and temporary reasonableness. Consider for instance an act of Satidaha (burning the widow in the pyre of the deceased husband) in India during the seventeenth century. Following the moral and religious rules of Satidaha, which were accepted at that time in India, that act surely appeared to many Hindus of that time as perfectly reasonable. But the same act has lost its appearance of reasonableness to the Hindus of our time.

I shall take up this problem of justification ("reasonableness" or "rationality" in this sense) of moral rules again in the third part of the thesis. Here let me mention some further difficulties in the notion of a reasonable action as that of a rule-following activity. In what follows I have been influenced by Kemp's discussion of rules.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>2</sup>J. Kemp, Reason, Action and Morality, Part 2, Section VII.

We may see that following rules is not necessarily a mark of rationality or reasonableness. In whatever field this notion of reasonableness is applied there may always be situations when the accepted rules do not apply any more. In cases of prudential rules, i.e., rules about means to ends, for example, sometimes one's own judgment is the best and only guide. It may always be possible to reach a desired end more easily by following a new means (in the light of new experience) which may not be covered by one's known or available prudential rules. Even in games, where rules are more or less precisely formulated, occasions arise when they are changed for the sake of clarity and consistency or for pragmatic considerations. The fact that rules can be changed and are changed, shows that there is no absolute reasonableness about them.

In the field of morals, however, the matter of reasonableness of actions which follow rules is a much more complex one. First, what are the moral rules? As I have indicated, there exists a notorious disagreement about the moral rules. This disagreement prevails not only at a higher level where someone says, "I want to know the rules of morality, not those of this or that system of morality, but the rules which are truly moral". Such disagreement may be seen though in a lesser degree, also about the rules of any particular moral system. It is perhaps only the great religions which can be said to have much in the way of a formulated code of moral rules. But even

in such systems not all types of action are covered by the given rules. In cases of conflict of duties, and in new situations which arise from scientific discoveries, those old rules frequently appear inadequate. However a more important point is that it is not essential to be consciously guided by the moral rules in order to be reasonable in morals. One may not know the rules at all, and yet be a good man. This is true also in most of the other fields. A man may be logical in his arguments without knowing the rules of inference. He may not have studied logic at all. And knowing rules and following them are not enough. One may know and follow all the rules of cricket and yet be a poor cricketer.

I must guard myself against a possible misunderstanding. I am not saying that there is no justification for following rules. It may be true that for many of us, who may not be very mature morally, intellectually or otherwise, rule-following activities are at times quite proper and economical. But this must not let us ignore that such activities are not essentially reasonable. For reasons I have mentioned, it is always possible, at least theoretically, to question the rationality or reasonableness of those rules and hence of rule-following activities.

Let me now examine a recent view of practical reason which R. Edgley has offered in criticism of Hume. Edgley construes Hume's view as that "there cannot be a reason for doing anything," because



according to Hume, the things for which there can be reasons are the things which can be true or false.<sup>1</sup>

But, Edgley argues, the notion of "something's being a reason for something else" is a generic notion: there may be different specific forms of this notion, such as, something's being a reason for thinking so-and-so, and something's being a reason for doing something.<sup>2</sup> According to Edgley, it is in the notion of "something's being a reason for doing something" that we have to understand how reason becomes practical. Thus he says:

...the fact that an action, not being true or false, cannot be the conclusion of an argument (i.e. that reason cannot be practical in this sense) [Hume's view] does not show that there cannot be reasons for doing things (i.e. reason cannot be practical in this sense).<sup>3</sup>

The first question which must be raised here is, does Hume deny Edgley's sense of "reason's being practical"?, i.e., does Hume maintain that there cannot be a reason for doing anything, in the sense in which Edgley imposes this view on Hume? In the Enquiry on p. 293, Hume clearly recognizes that an agent's adopting a certain means, i.e., his doing something, can be justified by reasons or judgments of means-end type. One of the examples which Hume offers there is that the agent

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<sup>1</sup>R. Edgley, "Practical Reason", Mind, 1965, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup>R. Edgley, Reason in Theory and Practice, p. 104.

<sup>3</sup>R. Edgley, "Practical Reason", p. 179.

takes exercise and this action is justified by his reason that he wants to keep health and by taking exercise he can keep health. Hume's point is that ultimate ends, or ends as opposed to means, cannot be thus justified by means-end type of reasons, because the notion of an end is such that it is not a means to a further end. In view of Hume's assertion that reasons of the means-end type can justify actions of a certain kind, it does not seem fair to attribute to Hume the view that there cannot be reasons for doing anything, and that reason cannot be practical in this sense. The sense in which Hume would deny that reason can be practical is the sense, as Edgley notes and seems to grant in his discussion, in which actions cannot be true or false. And I have already said, perhaps, enough to show that the notions of truth and falsehood do not properly apply to things like passions and actions. When Edgley says that according to Hume "there cannot be a reason for doing anything"<sup>1</sup> he seriously misleads the reader: according to Hume there can be the "means-end" type of reason.

Edgley further says:

If reason is practical it is so in this way, that for a practical judgment to be the conclusion of a reasonable argument implies not that an action could be a conclusion of that argument but that the premises of the argument, in being reasons for believing

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

the practical judgment, e.g. for believing that one ought to do a certain thing, are necessarily also reasons for acting in conformity with the judgment, i.e. for doing that thing.<sup>1</sup>

Here Edgley seems to be arguing that there can be reasons for doing things because reasonable practical arguments give us reasons for believing practical judgments: reason is practical in this sense. He thinks that this view proves "Hume's mistake".<sup>2</sup> But does this really prove Hume's mistake? To get a clear answer, I think, it is necessary to consider a case of a "reasonable" practical argument. Fortunately Edgley indicates the sort of conclusion which such an argument should have, i.e., "one ought to do a certain thing". To obtain such a conclusion from a "reasonable" argument, we have to consider the following sort of argument.

One ought to improve one's health.  
 A person who is suffering from vitamin-C-deficiency can improve his health by eating foods containing this vitamin.  
 Oranges and lemons contain vitamin-C.  
 I suffer from vitamin-C-deficiency.  
 I want to improve my health.  
 Therefore, I ought to eat oranges and lemons.

In this practical argument, following Edgley, it may be said that the reasons which justify my belief in the practical judgment are also reasons for my eating orange and lemon. But Hume need not deny this. And it should be pointed out that without the second premiss

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 179-180. My underlining.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

the argument does not become "reasonable" or logically valid. This premiss which helps to justify my belief in the conclusion, and hence (following Edgley) my action of eating orange and lemon, is a means-end type of judgment. Hume has recognized such judgments as playing the role of a guide to our actions. So I do not see how Edgley's type of argument, when it is taken in the above manner, can succeed in proving "Hume's mistake". In practical argument of the sort which I have considered, to obtain the conclusion demonstratively or reasonably, it is always necessary to use a general premiss about means to end. It may be that sometimes such a premiss may not be explicitly stated. Nevertheless it must be tacitly understood and must function in some such manner in order to elicit the practical conclusion.

However, practical reasonings may also be ethical. For example:

One ought to keep promises.

I promised to John that I would return his book this afternoon if I should be free.

It is afternoon now, and I am free.

Therefore, I ought to return John his book now.

Now, following Edgley, here again, it may be said that the premisses, in so far as they are reasons for believing the conclusion, are also reasons for acting in conformity with it. It is obvious that there is no means-end type of premiss as a reason for the conclusion. But it must be noted that there is a different kind of difficulty involved here. It is about the reasonableness or justification of the first premiss which is a moral principle. This is a serious problem,

and as I have already indicated in this chapter, Hume's scepticism may be apposite here. In the third part of the thesis I shall consider this problem in detail.

Before I pass on to the next chapter where I shall discuss Hume's second thesis concerning the relation of reason and passion and interpret one of his famous statements, let me summarise here the main points which I have tried to establish in this chapter. (1) Hume's view that reasoning alone cannot cause actions and that a desire is necessary to cause action is very plausible. (2) His view that when a desire is present, reasonings can influence conduct in two ways is correct. (3) If we restrict the use of "reasonable" and "unreasonable" to things which are true or false, i.e., to judgments, beliefs and propositions, then actions and passions themselves cannot be described by these adjectives. It is only by an extension that we can transfer these epithets to actions and passions. (4) Hume's use of "reasonable" and "unreasonable" in the present context is non-evaluative. (5) It is inappropriate to call actions and passions "reasonable" or "unreasonable" (as if these were inherently so) by playing with unusual senses of "true" and "false", "valid" and "invalid". (6) Hume's argument about the reasonableness of conduct rightly underlines the distinction between the theoretical and the practical fields. (7) If reasonableness is to be understood in terms of whether actions are in accordance with moral principles, then Hume's scepticism may be

apposite here. This will be adequately considered in the third part of the thesis. Hume's notion of "reasonable" or "unreasonable" is distinct from the notion of "morally laudable" or "morally blameworthy".

## IV

## THE SUPPOSED CONFLICT BETWEEN REASON AND PASSION

Hume finds no difficulty in proving his second thesis against the rationalists, i.e., reason cannot oppose passions in the direction of the will (see above p. 24). His argument is as follows:

Since reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to volition, I infer, that the same faculty is as incapable of preventing volition, or of disputing the preference with any passion or emotion. This consequence is necessary. 'Tis impossible reason cou'd have the latter effect of preventing volition, but by giving an impulse in a contrary direction to our passion; and that impulse, had it operated alone, wou'd have been able to produce volition. Nothing can oppose or retard the impulse of passion, but a contrary impulse; and if this contrary impulse ever arises from reason, that latter faculty must have an original influence on the will, and must be able to cause, as well as hinder any act of volition. But if reason has no original influence, 'tis impossible it can withstand any principle, which has such an efficacy, or ever keep the mind in suspence a moment. Thus it appears, that the principle, which opposes our passion, cannot be the same with reason, and is only call'd so in an improper sense. We speak not strictly and philosophically when we talk of the combat of passion and of reason. (T. 414-415).

It is true that the familiar difficulties of Hume's faculty talk obscure this argument. But, then, these difficulties are often present also in the views of his adversaries. However, I think that his point can be presented without talking of reason as a faculty. When this is done, Hume's argument remains valid. Purged from his faculty talk the argument is as follows: A reasoning or a belief alone (i.e.,

in the absence of a desire) cannot produce any impulse on the will, and so cannot cause action. This is what Hume previously tried to prove, and I tried to establish that this is a very plausible premiss. Now, to oppose the impulse of a desire or passion, another impulse is necessary. But a reasoning or a belief by itself is "inert". A reasoning or a belief which cannot produce the first impulse also cannot produce the second impulse required to oppose a passion or desire. So a reasoning or a belief alone cannot oppose a passion.

As we shall see in the sixth chapter, Hume has offered a psychological account for the rationalists' and common people's belief in the "combat of reason and passions". There I shall try to show that Hume's account has been a muddled and unnecessary one. But let us note here that whatever explanation one may offer to account for the belief in the supposed "combat of reason and passions", that does not affect Hume's present argument which is designed to prove that a reasoning or a belief alone cannot oppose passions "in the direction of the will."

It is in connection with this argument that Hume has made his famous statement: "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them." (T. 415). Since the statement is often misunderstood, a proper interpretation of it is necessary. I shall devote the rest of this chapter to examining some interpretations and finding out the correct one.



If we omit the phrase "ought to be" from the sentence then it creates no difficulty, because it then becomes a summary statement of what Hume has so far said about the place of reason and passion in conduct: (1) The immediate cause of an action is a passion or desire, (2) reasoning or belief (reason) guide the desire, (3) there is no conflict between a desire and a piece of reasoning or between a desire and a belief. But, then, what does this "ought to be" stand for?

(1) Kemp Smith in his commentary, The Philosophy of David Hume, takes it to mean that Hume is advocating here a theory of how we ought to act. He emphasises the words "ought to be". He writes "...Hume's central principle [is] that reason acts, as it ought, in the service of feeling and instinct."<sup>1</sup> Kemp Smith thinks that according to Hume beliefs are a kind of passion, and he ascribes to Hume the view that reason is and ought to be the slave of all kinds of passions, both desires (in actions) and natural beliefs (in epistemological matters). Thus he says:

'Passion' is Hume's most general title for the instincts, propensities, feelings, emotions and sentiments, as well as for the passions ordinarily so called; and belief, he teaches, is a passion. Accordingly the maxim which is central in his ethics - 'Reason is and ought to be the slave of passions' - is no less central in his theory of knowledge, being there the maxim: "Reason is and ought

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<sup>1</sup>N.K. Smith, The Philosophy of David Hume, p. 143.

to be subordinate to our natural beliefs.<sup>1</sup>

By taking the "ought to be" as basic in the statement under consideration and by attributing to Hume the view that natural beliefs are also passions he ascribes to Hume a general normative doctrine.

Against Kemp Smith's view I should like to observe the following: First, it is very hard to see in Hume's actual writings a symmetry between his view of the slavery of reason to passions as expressed in Book II and Book III of the Treatise and the alleged slavery of reason to natural beliefs. In Book I of the Treatise, where he discusses natural or causal beliefs, he does not maintain that reason assists in any way in the production of such beliefs. But in Book II and Book III while discussing passions and morals he maintains that passions are directed or helped by reason in causing actions. All he does in Book I of the Treatise is to show that our causal or inductive reasonings and beliefs, unlike demonstrative reasonings and knowledge, are not the products of reason, but he does not add that they are guided or directed by reason. Secondly, Kemp Smith does not supply any textual evidence for his view that according to Hume beliefs are passions. Thirdly, even if it is true that Hume maintains that beliefs are passions, it does not follow that he holds a normative view in his epistemology. For this to follow it would have to be shown that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p. 11.

Hume maintains such a normative view in his ethics. But clearly there are good reasons to conclude that the "ought to be" in the statement in question does not suggest any normative theory in Hume's ethics, i.e., it does not suggest Hume's view as to how we ought to act.

Let me point out these good reasons. First, Hume's arguments against the rationalists before (and after) this summary statement does not at all show that reason ought to be, but only that it is, the slave of passions. Secondly, Hume has not discussed whether it is right or obligatory to make reason subservient to passions. Thirdly, any attempt to show that Kemp Smith's interpretation about the "ought to be" can be derived from Hume's view that reason is the slave of passions will violate Hume's argument about the is-ought gap. As we shall see later (Chapter VIII below), according to Hume we cannot derive "ought"-statements from "is"-statements. Fourthly, Kemp Smith has not supplied textual evidence or any argument for his view that Hume is advocating a theory about how we ought to act. Finally, there are other occasions where Hume has used "ought to be", on which he does not mean to suggest any normative view. For instance, "But private benevolence is, and ought to be, weaker in some persons, than in others: And in many, or indeed in most persons, must absolutely fail. Private benevolence, therefore, is not the original motive of justice." (T. 483, my underlining). Hume has not said anything in his discussion here which might go to show that private benevolence

ought to be weaker in some persons than in others. The "ought to be" seems to be only Hume's enthusiastic manner of expressing his point. It is true that it seems odd that Hume should use these words in such a manner, but that is a different matter.

(2) Another interpretation of the passage has been offered by Glathe<sup>1</sup>, Årdal<sup>2</sup> and Broiles<sup>3</sup>. It is that the "ought to be" refers to a linguistic recommendation, that is, to how the term "reason" ought to be used in philosophical discourse. Thus, according to Glathe, Hume's recommendation here is that the term "reason" ought not to be used in such a way which would imply that reason is not the slave of passions. Glathe writes:

Hume's point in this passage is simply that since reason is as a matter of fact...the slave of the passions, the term "reason" ought not to be used in discourse that claims to be "strict" and "philosophical" as if it were synonymous with the term "the principle, which opposes our passion"; and the term ought not so to be used because so to use it is to speak loosely and unphilosophically. The "ought" applies, that is, not to the alleged slavery of reason, but to the way in which, in view of the de facto existence of the slavery, we are (at least in precise discourse) to refer to reason; it applies, that is, to usage of the term "reason", not to the denotation of this term....<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A.B. Glathe, "Hume's Theory of the Passions and of Morals", University of California Publications in Philosophy, Vol. 24.

<sup>2</sup>P.S. Årdal, Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise.

<sup>3</sup>R.D. Broiles, The Moral Philosophy of David Hume.

<sup>4</sup>op. cit. p. 10.

Similarly, Árdal, who recognizes his debt to Glathe on this point, remarks:

That, according to [Hume], [reason] is the slave of the passions involves little difficulty. It is the 'ought' that is puzzling; but the puzzle vanishes if one takes Hume to be making a terminological recommendation. To say that reason ought only to be the slave of the passions would then mean that we should use the word 'reason' in a certain way.<sup>1</sup>

And, according to Árdal, Hume's suggested way of using the term is that it should not refer to "a certain calm passion." In a strictly philosophical discourse "reason" and its derivatives like "reasonable", "unreasonable", etc. ought to refer to beliefs.<sup>2</sup> It may be seen that Árdal's view is not really different from that of Glathe. For, to say that the term "reason" ought not to be used for the principle which opposes passion (Glathe's view) and to say that the term "reason" ought not to be used for the calm passions (Árdal's view) are, in the context of Hume's discussion, virtually the same. As we shall see, in Chapter VI, Hume maintains that there are certain calm passions which may oppose the violent passions, and these we mistakenly take to be the operations of reason.

Like Glathe and Árdal, Broiles also says:

In the "slave" passage, when Hume says, "Reason is, and ought only

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<sup>1</sup>Árdal, op. cit., p. 107.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 107-108.

to be the slave of the passions..." the "ought only to be" refers to the use of the term 'reason'...<sup>1</sup>

Hume is imploring us, when we speak philosophically, not to misuse the word 'reason'. 'Reason' ought not to be used in strict and philosophical discourse as if it were synonymous with the expression 'the principle which opposes our passions'.<sup>2</sup>

In examining this interpretation we may first notice that unlike Kemp Smith's interpretation, it has the merit of being consistent with Hume's general position regarding reason and conduct. It is true that according to Hume the term "reason" should be used in the way which these interpreters suggest. Surely Hume would not approve of using the term "reason" for a principle which opposes passion. But the question here is what Hume means by the "ought to be", if he means anything at all, in the sentence under discussion. It may not always be a good policy to stretch or lop Hume's use of words so as to fit his statements to his general position. Such a procedure involves an "Infallibility Assumption" which is philosophically very bad.<sup>3</sup>

These interpreters suggest that the statement is semantically equivalent to the following:

- (1) Reason is the slave of passions.
- (2) The term "reason" ought not to be used in a way which would imply that it can oppose passion or that reason is not the slave of the passions.

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<sup>1</sup>Broiles, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>See A. Flew, "On the Interpretation of Hume" in Hume, ed. V.C. Chappell, p. 280.

Here in (1) "reason" refers to Hume's denotation of the term, namely, the faculty of reason, and in (2) "reason" refers to the word "reason". It requires a lot of imagination to think that Hume actually means this. By using the same word only once in a sentence one cannot unambiguously mean or refer to two different things. By thus removing the "puzzle" which confronts them, these commentators now impute to Hume some very odd syntax.

There is a further difficulty which Hume has to accept if the statement is taken in the manner of these interpreters. There seems to be an implicit inconsistency in his position as thus interpreted. (1) refers to Hume's theory which is a factual theory which might be false. But (2) is a definition, since it defines the word "reason", i.e., states how this word ought to be used. And a definition cannot be true or false. Thus the same statement now as it were points in two quite different directions. I am not saying that Hume could not have been inconsistent in this way. In fact, it is impossible to establish conclusively what exactly Hume meant here. But since these commentators' intention is to interpret the statement in such a way as to make it consistent with Hume's general theory, it is odd that they should by implication attribute an inconsistency to Hume. It is a good methodological rule to assume that an author does not contradict himself, unless there are very good independent reasons for assuming that he does so.

(3) There may be another interpretation, namely, that here Hume means that since reason is the slave of the passions, it ought to be regarded as such. (M.C. Bradley has suggested this interpretation to me.) If it is pointed out that this way of interpreting the statement is tantamount to making an argument and the argument is obviously invalid since it violates Hume's own principle that "is"-statements cannot entail "ought"-statements, then it might be suggested that there is a suppressed premiss here, namely, that "one ought to regard things as they really are."

This interpretation has some similarity with the preceding one, but unlike that one, it is not semantically based. Instead of suggesting that Hume recommends here how we ought to use the word "reason", it suggests that here he recommends how we ought to regard reason. It is therefore free from the difficulty which I found in the preceding one. But this interpretation does not seem to be convincing to me for the following reasons. First, the context in which Hume has made this statement shows that he is trying to establish only that reason is the slave of the passions. He seems to be arguing for a fact about reason and not about what sort of attitude we should have to this fact. Secondly, the statement does not look like an argument of the sort which this interpretation suggests. Thirdly, even if the statement is meant to be a part of an argument like the one suggested, the suppressed premiss is nowhere present in Hume's writings as far as I know. I have not come



across a place where Hume states that we ought to regard things as they really are. Even if Hume had such a view, he surely does not indicate it in the present context. Without the suppressed premiss the argument would be invalid. And it is not a good procedure to ascribe to an author some logical error when there is no evidence to support the ascription.

However, I think that there is good evidence for interpreting Hume's statement in another manner, which does not attribute to Hume any inconsistency or ambiguity. Let us note the passage which I have already quoted (see above p. 80) where Hume has made a similar use of "ought to be". Here Hume is talking about the original motive of justice, and explains in passing why private benevolence or "a regard to the interests of mankind" cannot be this motive. He has not said anything which might support that private benevolence ought to be weaker in some people than in others. The "ought to be" does not seem to refer to a linguistic recommendation about the word "private benevolence". Neither does it seem to refer to a recommendation about how we ought to regard private benevolence. The "ought to be", as it is used here, seems to be no more than an enthusiastic manner of speaking which the youthful Hume of the Treatise. (a work which he disowned later) seems to be fond of.<sup>1</sup> I suggest that it is the same use of "ought only to

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<sup>1</sup>In the Enquiry which was written at a mature age, but probably not a more mature work than the Treatise in respect of philosophical contents, it is difficult to find such an use of "ought to be". At

be" which Hume has made in the statement "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."<sup>1</sup> The statement is the outcome of Hume's youthful exuberance in challenging the rationalists who expressed their position in the same sort of language, that is, "Passions are or, at any rate ought to be the slave of reason". At least, Hume understood the rationalists' position as amounting to such a statement. This is evident from Hume's statement of their position which he attacks in the section "Of the Influencing Motives of the Will" where his slave-passage occurs:

Nothing is more usual in philosophy, and even in common life, than to talk of the combat of passion and reason, to give the preference to reason, and to assert that men are only so far virtuous as they conform themselves to its dictates. Every rational creature, 'tis said, is oblig'd to regulate his actions by reason; and if any other motive or principle challenge the direction of his conduct, he ought to oppose it, 'till it be entirely subdued, or at least brought to a con-

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least, I do not know of any passage in the Enquiry which contains this sort of use of "ought to be".

<sup>1</sup> It is comforting to note that some authors while quoting this statement of Hume in their works omit the "ought to be". For example, J.J.C. Smart's paper "Reason and Conduct" (Philosophy, 1950, p. 210). It seems that these authors rightly realize that it is unnecessary to retain the "ought to be" in their reference to Hume. It is also worthwhile to note Sydney Hook's remark: "If reason necessarily is the slave of the passions, it makes no sense to say it 'ought' to be". (S. Hook, "Review of Russell's Human Society in Ethics and Politics, (New York Times Book Review, Jan. 30, 1955, p. 3.)

formity with that superior principle. (T. 413, my underlining.)

The statement merely summarizes what Hume has said about the respective roles of desires or passions on the one hand, and of judgments and beliefs on the other. I suggest that the "ought only to be" expresses nothing but Hume's exuberance. Perhaps the pen of the youthful Hume ran away with him. His real point has nothing to do with the "ought only to be".

## V

THE MANNER IN WHICH JUDGMENTS AND BELIEFS  
INFLUENCE AGENTS

In the last chapter I have said that if we accept Hume's very plausible premiss that "reasonings alone cannot cause actions and a desire is the immediate cause of an action", then his argument about the inability of reason to oppose passions is valid. However, this should not let us ignore Hume's further view that reason can influence actions, that judgments or beliefs which are reached by reasonings can change our immediate desires or preliminary ends in order to attain our ultimate ends. That the agent is influenced by judgments or beliefs about existence of objects or about means to ends, in fact, substantiates Hume's view that reason and passion cannot oppose each other. In this chapter my main concern is to expound and examine Hume's view about how and when reasonings and beliefs influence agents.

The voluntary actions which Hume tries to explain are such that both a desire and a belief cause them. In some cases, a belief may excite a desire by presenting an idea (image or picture of a state of affairs) to the agent. (See above pp. 39-41.) In other cases, a desire is already there, perhaps originating from "a natural impulse or instinct", and a belief may guide the agent to the fulfilment of the

desire. This is how, to use a non-Humean phrase, "beliefs motivate the agents".

Now, there is a passage in the Treatise where Hume gives the impression that the influence of beliefs is automatic. Let me quote the passage:

... 'tis impossible, that reason and passion can ever oppose each other, or dispute for the government of the will and actions. The moment we perceive the falsehood of any supposition, or the insufficiency of any means our passions yield to our reason without any opposition. I may desire any fruit as of an excellent relish; but whenever you convince me of my mistake, my longing ceases. I may will the performance of certain actions, as means of obtaining any desir'd good; but as my willing of these actions is only secondary, and founded on the supposition, that they are causes of the proposed effect; as soon as I discover the falsehood of that supposition, they must become indifferent to me. (T. 416-417. My underlining.)

Here, of course, Hume's point is that perception of the falsehood of a belief automatically destroys a desire, not that perception of the truth of a belief automatically produces a desire. But he has another statement which seems to assert the automatic influence of the perception of the truth of a belief as well as that of the perception of the falsehood of a belief. The statement is this: "...according as our reasoning varies, our actions receive a subsequent variation". (T.414). This may be interpreted as implying that a change in reasoning and belief produces a desire for means which is then followed by a change in action. A change in action presupposes not only a change in belief but also a change in desire, since a belief by itself cannot cause an

action and a desire is necessary to cause an action. The new belief about means which results from a change in the reasoning must produce a new desire for the means. Thus, these passages may be interpreted as Hume's view that having a belief automatically influences the agent: either it automatically destroys a desire which he already has, or it automatically produces a desire. And the desires which are thus changed are second-level desires or preliminary desires, not desires for the ultimate ends.

Now, without certain qualifications these views are obviously false. In certain situations, having a belief often does not produce or destroy a desire. Our desires for obviously unattainable objects may very well continue. Yet, Hume's claim in those passages seems to be that it is a necessary truth that once the agent is convinced of a belief, the belief influences him. I think that given certain qualifications Hume's claim is true, and these qualifications may be produced from his own philosophy.

First, the crucial terms used in this context are "perceiving" or "being convinced of" the truth or falsehood of a belief. There are at least three kinds of situations in which we may say that an agent perceives or is convinced of the truth or falsehood of a belief. First, I may really perceive or be convinced of the truth or falsehood of a belief and yet this may not have anything to do with my practical life. I may be convinced of the falsehood of my supposition that Mars is

inhabited. My being convinced of this falsehood may not change any of my desires and hence may not lead me to act one way or another. My supposition or belief is simply not relevant to any of my desires. (I use "a belief relevant to a desire" in the following sense: A belief is relevant to a desire when an agent takes such a belief as showing him means or existence of objects which might fulfil some desire of his.) Secondly, there are situations where a belief is relevant to the agent's desire which is not opposed by another desire. In such cases, it is impossible that someone perceives or is convinced of a belief and yet does not act in accordance with it when it is relevant to his desire. Here the notion of "being influenced by a belief" is built into the notion of "perceiving or being convinced of a belief". Suppose that I have a desire to discuss something with a friend of mine who lives in another town. With this end in view I buy a bus ticket to go there. I have no other reason to go there. I now read in the newspaper that my friend died in an accident. Suppose I still get into the bus to go to that town. In the sense in which "perceiving" or "being convinced of" the truth or falsehood of a belief is used in such contexts, it will not be said that I have perceived or am convinced of the truth of the newspaper report. In such situations, when an agent perceives or is convinced of the truth or falsehood of a belief, the motivating influence of the belief necessarily succeeds. Thirdly, there are situations of conflict of desires in which an agent

may really perceive or be convinced of the truth or falsehood of a belief, but he may not act in accordance with his belief because of the presence of a competing desire whose motivating influence is stronger than that of the desire to which the neglected belief is relevant. The first kind of situation is not important for my discussion. It is only the second and the third kinds of situations which are relevant to my discussion. Henceforward I shall use BC2 and BC3 for the second and the third kinds of situations respectively.

Let me now distinguish between the different senses of "strongest desire" and "stronger desire". This will help us to avoid confusion. There are at least the following three senses in which we may understand these phrases. (1) "Strongest desire" may refer to an introspective notion. It is the desire which an agent, on reflection, reports to be the strongest one in respect of operativeness. (He may be mistaken in his report.) In this sense, the agent may weigh his desires and may report that one is stronger than another, while a third is the strongest of all. Here his strongest desire may or may not eventually cause an action. (2) "Strongest desire" may mean the desire which, among all the desires of the agent, has the strongest motivating or operative influence. It is in fact the strongest tendency apt to initiate a certain course of action. It may or may not be the same as the one which is reported to be the strongest one by the agent. It is not an introspective notion. It is the desire which, other things being equal, will lead to an action. In



this sense, it is not a probabilistic notion. If there are two competing desires, one may be called stronger than the other in this sense. (3) "Strongest desire" may also mean the desire which in fact has caused an action. In a situation of conflict, when an action results, the desire which causes the action is necessarily the strongest one in this sense. When there are two conflicting desires, we can talk of a stronger desire in this sense. "Strongest desire" or "stronger desire" in the third sense are also the "strongest desire" and "stronger desire" respectively in the second sense. The difference between them is simply this: in the second sense these phrases refer to desires which have not caused, but, other things being equal, will cause actions, while in the third sense they refer to desires which have already caused actions.

As I shall show in the next chapter, Hume himself makes a distinction between "strong" and "weak" desires or passions in respect of their motivating influence, and another between "calm" and "violent" passions, the latter distinction being a muddled one. However, in view of his distinction between strong and weak desires I take it that he would be quite willing to accept our second and third senses of "strongest desire" and "stronger desire". That is, he would grant that the desire which has the strongest motivating tendency is also the desire which, other things being equal, will cause an action. And he would also grant that the desire which has

caused an action must have had the strongest motivational influence.<sup>1</sup>  
 At least, I do not see any reason why Hume should not grant these.

In the rest of this chapter I shall use "strongest desire" and "stronger desire" only in the second and the third senses. In which of these senses I shall use them will depend on whether or not the action, whose cause is the desire, has taken place. This will be clear from the context.

Let us now see Hume's view of the influence of beliefs. I must first point out that in my quoted passages, clearly, Hume is not thinking of situations of conflict of desires. Therefore, it is in BC2 that we have to understand his use of "being convinced of" and "perceiving" the truth or falsehood of a belief, in the present context, if we wish to make sense of his view of the automatic influence of beliefs. The desire which is altered by the perception

<sup>1</sup>It may be noted that the view which I am attributing to Hume is free from some familiar types of objections which have been raised in a related but different context, namely, against psychological hedonism. (It must be remembered that the position which I attribute to Hume is not psychological hedonism.) One such objection against psychological hedonism is that it is "a sheer piece of dogmatism, unsupported by evidence" that men cannot help choosing what gives them the greatest pleasure. (D.H. Monro, Empiricism and Ethics, pp. 216-217.) In our context, similarly, the objection might be that it is a sheer piece of dogmatism, and empirically untrue, that men always do what they most want or desire to do. But in view of the meaning of "strongest desire" which I have attributed to Hume, this criticism does not apply to his view about actions which arise from conflicting desires.

of the falsehood of the belief is not in conflict with another desire. And the desire which causes an action, by being influenced by a belief, is not in conflict with a rival desire. There is no rival or competing desire here. So the question of whether the desire is stronger or strongest in any of those senses of "stronger" or "strongest desire" does not arise.

Now, what is Hume's view of the influence of beliefs in situations of conflict? Unfortunately Hume has not adequately discussed the influence of beliefs in such situations. However, it is not difficult to envisage what he would have to say on this subject. Let us first note that Hume has admitted that someone may act contrary to his beliefs which he may be really convinced of (in BC3) or which he "knows". As he says, "Men often act knowingly against their interest..." (T. 418). So Hume grants BC3. I think that Hume's view of the influence of beliefs in cases of conflict would be this: A belief of which the agent is really convinced (in BC3) and which is relevant to his desire will not be influential if a stronger desire is rival to the first desire.

The problem at our hand is an ancient one, namely, that of the weakness of will (akrasia) (although not the typical cases of moral weakness where the agent falls short of his ideals). Aristotle came to see the truth contained in the Platonic-Socratic view that moral weakness is due to ignorance and also the truth of the common view of mankind that men sometimes act contrary to their knowledge of

what is best. Despite his respect for the second view, which is based on experience, he finally remained in the tradition of his predecessors. He could not deny that being overcome by appetite always involves a kind of ignorance. This he had to conclude because of his analysis of the different senses in which a man may be said to know something and because of his notion of a man with practical wisdom as "one who will act."<sup>1</sup> There is a special difficulty in Aristotle's account. This difficulty arises from his notion of practical wisdom and from the fact that he did not notice that it is the strongest desire which causes an action in a situation of conflict. However, to concentrate on Hume's case, his view may be expressed in the following tautological assertions: (1) "In a situation where there is no conflict of desires, a belief whose truth or falsity the agent is convinced of (BC2) will automatically influence him." (2) "In a situation of conflict, the agent's strongest desire causes him to disregard his really perceived belief (in BC3) if the belief is relevant to a weaker desire (weaker in motivating influence)." These two tautologies, when taken together, look very similar to Hare's statement that "It is a tautology to say that we cannot sincerely assent to a command addressed to ourselves, and at the same time

<sup>1</sup>Aristotle, Ethica Nicomachea, tr. by W.D. Ross, 1146. See also R.D. Milo, Aristotle on Practical Knowledge and Weakness of Will, Ch. 3.

not perform it, if now is the occasion for performing it, and it is within our (physical and psychological) power to do so."<sup>1</sup> Hare, however, suggests in his discussion of the point that in cases where someone acts against his belief about what is to his best interest, he is not acting voluntarily. He maintains that in such cases the agent might be acting under a "psychological impossibility" to follow the belief which is to his best interest. Thalberg rightly shows the difficulties in such a position.<sup>2</sup> However, it should be noted that the view which I am attributing to Hume does not commit him to the view that all such actions, where a perceived belief is disobeyed, are involuntary or due to some kind of psychological compulsion (although Hume would insist that all such actions, indeed all actions, are caused). Hume denies "liberty of indifference", i.e., the view that our actions are uncaused. But he does not deny "liberty of spontaneity" according to which an agent is free when he is not under coercion or violence. (Treatise, Book II, Part III, Sections I and II.) However, Hume's account of freedom of spontaneity is not very clear. He seems to suggest that a person who cannot do something due to his fear is under some psychological restraint: "...the fear of the civil magistrate

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<sup>1</sup>R.M. Hare, Freedom and Reason, p. 79. See also Hare's The Language of Morals, pp. 20, 168-169.

<sup>2</sup>I. Thalberg, "The Socratic Paradox and Reasons for Action", Theoria, 1965, Part 3, pp. 250-254.

is as strong a restraint as any of iron..." (T. 312). The crucial point is, how are we to decide which mental causes are restraints or violence and which are not. This is a point which Hume has not clarified. However, there is a class of actions which result from conflict of desires where it is sensible to say that the agent has not acted from coercion or restraint or violence, that he could have acted otherwise. For example, a student who believes that he must work hard in order to obtain his degree may disregard his belief and pass most of his time in the cricket field, his desire to practise cricket being the stronger desire. Here the student does not act under a restraint. His act is a voluntary one. I think that Hume would not hesitate to call such actions free or "spontaneous".

One may like to know Hume's view of the relation of a belief or reason to the strongest desire or stronger desire in a situation of conflict. Hume has not adequately discussed this subject, but we can envisage his view. As we shall see later, Hume maintains that our desires for ultimate ends, or ends as opposed to means, are not justified by reasons of means-end type; we just desire them. We desire them not for any further end. If an end is desired for some other end, then it is merely a preliminary end or means. And he also maintains, as it should be clear by now, that our desire for an end, in order to result in an action (the kind of action which

Hume is trying to explain) is aided by a means-end type of belief or reason. In the light of these views of Hume, we may now attribute to him the following: In a situation of conflict, the strongest desire or stronger desire for the end is necessarily not justified by any reason of means-end type, although it may be aided by a belief or reason in order to result in an action. The agent just desires his end. Now according to Hume, the strongest or stronger desire for an end extends to the known means. We can talk about strongest desire or stronger desire for the means as well as we can talk about the strongest desire or stronger desire for the end. The strongest or stronger desire for the means is supported or justified by the agent's reasons, namely, that by adopting this means he will fulfil his desire for the end.

Let me take a concrete example. A student desires to be a test cricketer. He also desires to obtain his degree. Let us suppose that he desires both of these things as ends; he has no reason why he desires them. Furthermore, he believes that to obtain his degree he has to work hard, he must not pass his day in the cricket field. He also believes that to become a test cricketer he must practise the game during most of the day. So he is in conflict, Now suppose that his stronger desire is to become a test cricketer. This desire will now be automatically extended to his known means, i.e., to practising cricket. Let me use SD1 for the stronger de-



sire for the end and SD2 for the stronger desire for the known means. According to the view which I have attributed to Hume, SD1 is not justified or supported by any reason; the student desires to become a test cricketer for its own sake. SD1, in order to result in an action, is aided by a belief or reason that by practising cricket in that manner he will become a test cricketer. SD2 is justified by a reason, namely, that he will become a test cricketer by playing cricket in that manner. It is obvious that the reason which helps SD1 to result in an action is the same as the reason which justifies SD2. But SD1 is not justified by any reason.

The upshot of my discussion may be expressed in the following four points: (1) In a situation where there is no conflict of desires, the agent is automatically influenced by his really perceived belief (BC2) which is relevant to the fulfilment of his desire for an ultimate end. (2) In situations of conflict, a really perceived belief (BC3) which may be relevant to some desire of the agent may be neglected if his stronger or strongest desire is to act against it. (3) In a situation of conflict where an action results, the action may or may not be voluntary. (4) In a situation of conflict, the strongest or stronger desire for an end is not justified by a reason but the strongest or stronger desire for a means is justified by a reason. The last three points are not made by Hume himself but his philosophy of action



either supports them or, at least, is not inconsistent with them.

I now propose to examine certain criticisms of Hume's view of the automatic influence of beliefs or reasons in the light of the above discussion. These criticisms have been made by Falk<sup>1</sup> and Kydd<sup>2</sup>. Since Falk's criticisms are more elaborate I shall concentrate on them. Falk uses the simile of a juke-box to describe Hume's view, expressed in the two passages which I have quoted on p. 29 above: "The guidance is automatically provided, for oneself or others, if one presses the right buttons of factual information."<sup>3</sup> Falk does not have any objection to the view that reasons can influence our actions<sup>4</sup>, but he argues against the view

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<sup>1</sup>W.D. Falk, "Action-guiding Reasons", Journal of Philosophy, 1963, pp. 702-718.

<sup>2</sup>Kydd, op. cit., pp. 102-103.

<sup>3</sup>Falk, p. 706.

<sup>4</sup>It may be pointed out that Falk describes the view that reason can influence actions as "the force view of reason". It is not quite clear in what sense he is thinking of "reasons as forces". Is it psychological (roughly as in Davidson's "primary reason" - see D. Davidson's "Actions, Reasons and Causes", Journal of Philosophy 1963, p. 686) or quasi-logical, as in "What reasons are there for believing the theory of relativity?" Sometimes it appears that he takes "reasons" in the psychological sense, e.g., when he says, "Stevenson's, and Hume's, views of the choice-guiding role of reasons and information [my underlining] ask for revision, but not, I think, on the ground that reasons and causes have no affinity and that never the twain shall meet." (Falk, op. cit., p. 703). Here, as I have shown by underlining, "reasons" and "information" are taken in the same sense. In this sense, reasons are natural causes. Hume has used "reason", in the present context, in this sense, and this is what Falk needs. But strangely, he goes on to say that

that these reasons about means automatically influence us once they are known and if the agent has the end to which the reasons about means are relevant. He thinks that knowledge of reasons, though necessary, is not sufficient by itself to influence the agent's choice of means, even if he has the end to which the reasons are relevant. A further condition, that of the "right-mind-  
ing" of what is known', as he calls it, must be added to complete the picture of guidance of actions by reasons. By this condition he means that the choosing of the means and the reaching of the end must be "identified in thought". Kydd similarly characterizes this additional condition in the guidance of action by reason as "an act of co-contemplation."<sup>1</sup>

Against Hume's contention that a "reason" or belief which influences us does influence us automatically, Falk argues in the following manner: First, Hume's view neglects the fact that for a reason or belief to be a reason, there must also be a judgment of its relevance to the case. A proper account of action-guiding reasons must recognize that "knowing" facts is not enough; we require, furthermore, another piece of "knowledge" - a judgment to the effect that the reasons are or are not relevant. Secondly,

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the modus operandi of reasons is not the same as that of natural causes (Ibid., p. 704), and thus obscures his position. This obscurity adversely affects his discussion.

<sup>1</sup>Kydd, op. cit., p. 103.

Falk holds that it is not enough that reasons must be "known"; they must also be "taken to heart". Falk tries to establish his point by bringing in what seems to me to be cases of conflict of desires. He gives two examples, namely, "of the drinker or speedster who is impervious to consequences of which he is not ignorant or unafraid." In such cases, he thinks, the drinker and the speedster have not taken reasons to heart and that is why they are not influenced by them.

The difficulty with Falk's objections to Hume seems to be that he is thinking of cases of conflict whereas Hume's view of the automatic influence of beliefs is meant to be only about non-conflicting cases. From what I have taken to be the plausible view of Hume about cases of conflict it is clear that Falk's examples of the drinker and the speedster can be adequately explained by bringing in the notion of "stronger desire". If the drinker and the speedster with their knowledge of the consequences have other ends for which their desire is stronger (e.g., to have the pleasure of drinking or to have the pleasure of driving at a high speed, perhaps with the good reasons or beliefs that some drinks will not endanger health and speeding does not necessarily lead to accidents, if one remains steady and alert, etc.), then they will drink and drive fast.

But Hume's view of the automatic influence of beliefs refers to

non-conflicting cases only. And in such cases Hume's notion of "perceiving" or "being convinced of" a belief (BC2) is such that the conditions which Falk takes to be necessary for a belief to be influential, are already included in it. (1) A judgment of relevance is already presupposed in BC2. Hume has no reason to deny that a belief becomes a reason for action only when it is relevant to the case; he would say that otherwise it would remain a piece of uninteresting information, so far as its relation to the end is concerned. The notion of BC2 is such that a further demand for a judgment of relevance is pointless. (2) I take Falk's phrase "reason taken to heart" to mean "reason which influences an action". Otherwise a reason may be taken to heart and yet may not influence us, in which case Falk's point will not be established. Now, if we properly understand Hume's BC2, then it may be seen that "reason taken to heart" is only another way of saying "reason which the agent perceives or is convinced of (in that sense)".

Falk raises a few more objections to Hume. He says that "the juke-box interpretation of how the interesting implications of actions always furnish persuasive reasons cannot explain how they function as reasons any more than why they should necessarily do so."<sup>1</sup> Hume's case, as Falk rightly puts it, is that "once an action is known to contribute, through an implication, to a wanted (or

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<sup>1</sup>Falk, *op. cit.*, p. 707

unwanted) end, the interest in the end will come to be transferred, through this knowledge, to the action."<sup>1</sup> Let me quote the relevant passages from Hume: Desire for and aversion from an object "extend themselves to the causes and effects of that object." (T. 414). "...were the end totally indifferent to us, we should feel the same indifference towards the means". (E. 286). Falk's objection seems to be that Hume has left one thing unexplained, namely, "why this mechanism of transfer should be invariably at work." In support of his objection he presents the example of a doctor whose medical knowledge may not immunize him against the habits of overindulgence. According to Falk, a desire for or an aversion from certain consequences, may not be manifested in one's present activities, although sometimes the desire or aversion is manifested in one's present striving. For example, the drinker's aversion from having a hangover is not manifested in his act of drinking, and my desire to write a good thesis is manifested in my present striving to write one.<sup>2</sup> In the light of this distinction between

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Falk expresses this distinction as that between "wanted(or unwanted) consequences which are manifested in the present activities of the agent" and "wanted or unwanted consequences which are not thus manifested". This is misleading, because consequences cannot be manifested or not manifested in present activities, only a desire for or aversion from consequences can be manifested in the present striving. However, what Falk seems to mean may be expressed in terms of the two kinds of desire or aversion as I have indicated.

the two kinds of desire or aversion, Falk thinks that one may say that the doctor with his medical knowledge may really have a desire for health, and yet may overindulge, even though his desire for health is not manifested in his act of overindulgence.

According to the view which I have attributed to Hume, the strongest desire for one end leads the agent to ignore the competing desires for other ends. In such a case, the desires for ends which are thus overridden cannot extend to the known means. But if there is no conflicting desire, then it is necessarily true that when one desires an end, he must desire the known means to the end, since if this does not happen, it would show that one does not really desire the end.<sup>1</sup> Now, the case which Falk presents is one of conflict. The doctor has on the one hand a desire for health and the belief that to attain health he must not overindulge. On the other hand, he has a stronger desire to eat a savoury meal. (Perhaps he may rationalize that one more rich meal will not do much harm, or he may just succumb to his stronger desire without any belief or

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<sup>1</sup>In order to avoid misunderstanding let me illustrate the point by taking an example from Nowell-Smith's Ethics (p. 116): If a man wants to go to a concert, and if the only means is to steal a ticket, then it may well happen that he may not come to choose **this** means. But according to the view which I have attributed to Hume, this would be so because the man had a stronger desire not to steal.

rationalization supporting it.) According to the view which I have attributed to Hume, the stronger desire will "win", and the doctor's belief relevant to his weaker desire will not be influential, i.e., it will not extend to the known means.

Another argument of Falk is that knowledge of relations of means to ends "though necessary, is for various reasons not necessarily sufficient" for extending the interest in the end to the means whenever the means-end relation is known. One such reason is that the knowledge may be "insufficiently exercised". For example, a person lamenting his state of health, may repress his knowledge whenever it comes to making a medical appointment. Now, as I have indicated, according to Hume, belief by itself is not sufficient to cause an action. The agent must also have a desire, or in cases of conflict, he must have a stronger desire to act in a certain way. Hume needs only point out that the fact that sometimes a piece of knowledge or a belief is "insufficiently exercised" is due to the presence of an overriding desire acting against the desire to which the repressed knowledge or belief is relevant. It is absurd to say that (1) the agent really desires A, (2) he is convinced of (BC2) the belief that B leads to A, (3) he has no overriding contrary desire, and yet (4) he does not desire or resolve to do B.

Falk claims that in order for the interest in the end to be extended to the means through reasons, it is required that the means must be

viewed as part of the very process of reaching the end. In other words, "the identification in thought between choosing the means and the very reaching of the end" must be complete. This is the requirement of "right-minding" in which indifference to the known means cannot coexist with the desire for the end. Here what is involved is "the inclusion of one thought object in another."

It is not quite clear what exactly Falk means by "the identification in thought" or "the inclusion of one thought object in another." He does not mean by this the recognition that to adopt the means is to do something of the very kind one wants to do. As he says, "Something of an A kind is wanted" and "X is of an A kind" in no way entail that "X is wanted" or "has been wanted all along."<sup>1</sup> But the particular X will be bound to be wanted, according to him, if "it is thought of as included in the very thought object of an actual want." What are we to understand here by "inclusion in"? How can a thought object (to take his example, "reaching of health as the terminus ad quem of a process of change"<sup>2</sup>) include another thought object (say, exercise as the means of reaching of health)? Obviously what we have here is not spatial inclusion. Falk also denies that it is a case of "the inclusion of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 716-717.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 716.



one propositional function in another." However, in the light of the well-known obscurity of the notion of propositional function<sup>1</sup> it is not clear what Falk means here. Could it be a relation of species to genus, as getting health through exercise is a species of getting health? So that if getting health through exercise is wanted this implies that exercise is wanted? What is involved here is that if the agent has an end and he has the belief (reason) that a particular means produces the end, then unless he wants the means he will not adopt it. This means that reasons in order to be influencing must excite the agent's desire or aversion. But this is a condition which is already present in Hume's concepts of action-guiding reasons. As Hume says, "It can never in the least concern us to know that such objects are causes and such others effects, if both the causes and effects be indifferent to us" (already quoted). As I have said earlier, a fundamental point in Hume's theory is that it is not the reasoning or belief alone but a desire or an aversion excited by a belief (or as Hume would put it, excited by an idea or mental image produced to the agent by his reasoning) or by "an unknown impulse or instinct" which moves us to action.

Finally, Falk has the following argument. The "grammar of reason language" shows that one may have a reason in favour of doing something and yet one may not do it. He says '...the grammar

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<sup>1</sup>See W.V. Quine, Set Theory and Its Logic, p. 254.

of "tell" leaves it quite open whether or not that which tells also compels...There is no contradiction in saying that what gave one every ground, and was known to do so, failed to motivate one in any way.<sup>1</sup> I believe that no one will deny what Falk says here. But there is a danger of missing facts if one concentrates too much on linguistic propriety. "The reason X gave one every ground, was known to do so, and yet failed to motivate one in any way" - this may be quite true; but when this is true, it is so because one has a stronger desire acting against a weaker desire to which the neglected belief or reason is relevant. This should be clear from what I have said about the causation of actions in cases of conflict. We may also note that if the "telling" reasons fail to motivate (for the reason I have indicated), we cannot make them motivate even by adding Falk's condition of "right-minding" or "taking into heart" of those reasons (for the same reason). If the "grammar of reason language" proves what Falk claims, then it also proves the following: "There is no contradiction in saying that what gave one every ground, was known to do so, and what one 'took to heart' or 'minded rightly', failed to motivate one in any way." This would prove the falsehood of Falk's view that reasons are influencing if and only if they are "taken to heart" or "minded rightly". But if we construe "telling reason" in the sense in which Hume uses "reason which one perceives or is convinced of"

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<sup>1</sup>Falk, op. cit., p. 709.

(BC2) i.e., "reason which necessarily influences" (which is the same thing as Falk's use of "reason which one takes to heart or minds rightly"), then it is a contradiction to say, "One has a telling reason (a reason which influences) but it does not influence."

I think that nothing in Hume's account is inconsistent with Falk's view that sometimes beliefs or reasons fail to motivate. (Note again Hume's remark: "Men often act knowingly against their interest.") The truth of this view is of course a matter of common experience. But we must note that where a belief (which the agent really holds) does not motivate, there is a stronger desire acting contrary to the desire to which the neglected belief is relevant. If Falk's view is that Hume's explanatory model of actions cannot incorporate this, then he is mistaken. Indeed, Hume's passages which express his view of the automatic influence of reasons do not refer to cases of conflict of desires. And Hume has not clearly said what his view of the influence of beliefs or reasons in such cases is. At times it has seemed to me that Falk and Kydd are fighting with an opponent who does not exist. I have given an account of Hume's possible view of the situations of conflict. I think that if my account is correct, then it can perfectly take care of Falk's and Kydd's criticisms. They have not really shown that an admission of the fact that the agent may not be influenced by beliefs can affect Hume's theory in any way. However, they have

done a good service by bringing into light a part of Hume's philosophy of action which Hume himself has not sufficiently investigated and elaborated.

In the next chapter I shall show that Hume has something important to say about conflict of desires and how and why we act as we do in such situations. Sometimes we frustrate a most insistent desire and act in accordance with "a settled principle of action" or a desire which is "corroborated by reflection and resolution". What happens in such cases is that the most insistent desire which the agent thinks he has frustrated is really what he takes to be the most intense one, although the strongest desire is a different one. Hume's position regarding the relation between desires and actions is simply this: Desires are essentially action-producing although in situations of conflict they may be prevented from producing actions by other desires. In any case, Hume holds, a desire is necessary as the cause of an action. And perhaps we can interpret Hume as asserting that this is a necessary truth because part of the meaning of the word "desire" is "that which tends to cause action". Perhaps Hume would not be asserting "desires cause actions" as a synthetic necessity, because he does not seem to believe in synthetic necessities.

## VI

## THE DOCTRINE OF CALM PASSIONS

In this chapter I shall consider the following: (1) Hume's doctrine of calm passions, (2) his use of the doctrine as a psychological account of the rationalists' belief in "the combat of reason and passion", (3) his view of the operation of the calm passions in moral conduct, and, finally, (4) an examination of certain criticisms of Hume.

Let me first point out what I take to be the salient features of Hume's doctrine of "calm desires" or "calm passions" (he uses both these phrases). (1) Hume has made a distinction between calm and violent passions on the basis of their emotional quality. Just as his distinction between impressions and ideas was made on the basis of their force and vivacity (Treatise, Book I, Part I, Section I), the distinction between calm and violent passions depends on the degree of their emotional intensity. As Hume puts the distinction:

The reflective impressions may be divided into two kinds, viz. the calm and the violent. Of the first kind is the sense of beauty and deformity in action, composition, and external objects. Of the second are the passions of love and hatred, grief and joy, pride and humility. (T. 276).

...there are certain calm desires and tendencies, which, tho' they be real passions, produce little emotion in the mind...

[Sometimes they] cause no disorder in the soul... Besides these calm passions, which often determine the will, there are certain violent emotions of the same kind, which have likewise a great influence on that faculty. (T. 417-418, my underlining.)

(2) On occasions the emotional level of a calm passion may rise and thus it may turn into a violent one. Then we may have a violent passion. As Hume says:

...a calm passion may easily be chang'd into a violent one, either by a change of temper, or of the circumstances and situation of the object...(T. 438).

The raptures of poetry and music frequently rise to the greatest height; while those other impressions, properly called passions, may decay into so soft an emotion, as to become, in a manner, imperceptible. (T. 276).

(3) Some of the calm passions may have to do with evaluations (e.g., "the sense of beauty and deformity in action, composition, and external objects", T. 276), but others (e.g., "kindness to children", T. 417) may have no such character. (4) Hume makes a distinction between a weak and a strong passion or desire on the basis of their motivating influence. This is quite distinct from the distinction between calm and violent passions. A passion may be calm and yet very strong in motivating influence, and another may be violent while weak. Sometimes the motivating influence of the calm passions may be so strong as to be able to control the violent ones. Thus, in the Treatise Hume says:

'Tis evident passions influence not the will in proportion to their violence, or the disorder they occasion in the

temper...We must, therefore, distinguish betwixt a calm and a weak passion; betwixt a violent and a strong one. (T.418-419).

Generally speaking, the violent passions have a more powerful influence on the will; tho' 'tis often found that the calm ones, when corroborated by reflection, and seconded by resolution, are able to control them in their most furious movement. (T. 437-438).

In a letter to Hutcheson Hume expresses the same view: "There is a calm Ambition, a calm Anger or Hatred, which 'tho calm, may likewise be very strong, & have the absolute Command over the Mind."<sup>1</sup>

Before I proceed to consider Hume's use of his doctrine of calm passions, it may be well to note the wrong manner in which he distinguishes a calm passion from a violent one. His criterion for the distinction is the degree of their emotional intensity. They are two things of the same kind. He clearly recognizes this in my quotation on pp. 114-115. But as Ryle rightly points out, this is a mistake.<sup>2</sup> The calm passions differ in kind from the violent ones. Ryle's words for these two kinds of passion are "inclination" and "agitation" respectively. As he says:

It would be absurd to say that a person's interest in Symbolic Logic was so violent that he could not concentrate on Symbolic Logic, or that someone was too patriotic to be able to work for his country. Inclinations are not disturbances and so cannot be violent or mild disturbances. A man whose

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<sup>1</sup>David Hume, The Letters of David Hume, ed. J.Y.T. Greig, Vol I, p. 46, my underlining.

<sup>2</sup>Ryle, The Concept of Mind, pp. 93-94.

dominant motive is philanthropy or vanity cannot be described as distracted or upset by philanthropy or vanity; for he is not distracted or upset at all.<sup>1</sup>

Agitations can be violent or mild, inclinations cannot be either. Inclinations can be relatively strong or relatively weak, but this difference is not a difference of degree of upsettingness; it is a difference of degree of operativeness, which is a different sort of difference. Hume's word 'passion' was being used to signify things of at least two disparate types.<sup>2</sup>

In a condition of agitation a person may be in conflict between his two inclinations, or one of his inclinations may be thwarted by the hard facts of life. Thus, agitations "presuppose the existence of inclinations which are not themselves agitations, much as eddies presuppose the existence of currents which are not themselves eddies."<sup>3</sup>

No doubt there is a distinction between the calm and the violent passions, i.e., between inclinations and agitations. But Hume makes it on the basis of a wrong criterion, for which reason the distinction, in his hand, has become a muddled one. As a result, he has been led to think that a calm passion itself may turn into a violent one. There is another absurd consequence which follows from Hume's manner of distinguishing the calm passions from the violent ones. (This follows, of course, when we realize the truth of Ryle's view that agitations cannot be inclinations to do

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 93.



something.) When Hume's two distinctions, namely, that between the calm and the violent passions, and that between the strong and the weak passions are taken jointly, we get the view that a violent passion (an agitation) may be relatively strong or relatively weak (in respect of motivation). This is absurd, because if a violent passion is not a desire or inclination, then it cannot be a strong or a weak desire or inclination.

From all this it would appear that Hume would have done better if he had dropped the notion of "violent passions" as desires or inclinations, although he could retain the notion of "violent passions" as agitation condition. Hume sometimes does this as it appears from his expressions like "impressions, properly called passions". Indeed sometimes he writes as though a violent passion is not a desire but an agitation condition which causes a desire. For example, "When I receive any injury from another, I often feel a violent passion of resentment, which makes me desire his evil and punishment...(T. 418). But, unfortunately, Hume often enough takes the violent passions themselves as some kind of desire or inclination. Now, what about Hume's calm desires? It seems to me that here again he at times comes very close to recognizing that the calm desires, on occasions, may not cause any emotion. For instance, he says that when a calm passion becomes "a settled principle of action, and is the predominant inclination of the soul, it commonly produces no longer any sensible agitation." (T. 419, my underlining.)

Then again, we read that when certain "passions are calm, and cause no disorder in the soul, they are very readily taken for the determinations of reason..." (T. 417, my underlining.) Indeed, Hume's account of calm passions and his use of it would have been clear if he had not had the tendency to group these passions as some kind of mild desires.

However, the chief merit of Hume's notion of calm passions lies in his taking them as capable of becoming what he calls "a settled principle of action." (T. 419). This is how, according to Hume, a calm passion may at times become a very strong desire. Such a "settled principle of action" or "a predominant inclination of the soul", in our modern terminology would be called "a trait of character". To describe a person as having a trait or "settled principle of action" is to describe him as a person who would normally act in a certain manner. Hume also notes that we do not always act from our predominant inclination or settled principle. (Hume thinks that to be guided by such a settled principle of action is a virtue: "...there is no man so constantly possess'd of this virtue, as never on any occasion to yield to the sollicitations of passion and desire". (T. 418). Perhaps here Hume is thinking of his view which he expresses later, the view that "rules of morality" are founded on such calm desires.) Hume's notion of such a principle and also, as we shall presently see, his notion of "a general calm determination of the passions" resulting in the

framing of the rules of morality make the doctrine of calm passions useful and important in his philosophy.

Let me now consider Hume's uses of the doctrine of calm passions. First he uses it to give a psychological account of the rationalists' belief in "the combat of reason and passion". His account is as follows: The faculty of reason cannot be in conflict with the passions. When we think that we are having a "combat of reason and passions", we are actually having a conflict of passions themselves. In such a case, the conflict is between a calm passion and a violent one. And what is thought to be the "victory of reason" is merely a case of a calm desire overriding a violent one. "What we call strength of mind, implies the prevalence of the calm passions above the violent." (T. 418). According to Hume, the operation of the faculty of reason is very similar to that of the calm passions in that both of them produce little or no emotional agitation in the agent. This is why it is easy to confound the one with the other. In Hume's words:

Reason...exerts itself without producing any sensible emotion... every action of the mind, which proceeds with the same calmness and tranquility, is confounded with reason by all those, who judge of things from the first view and appearance...When [the] passions are calm, and cause no disorder in the soul, they are very readily taken for the determinations of reason, and are suppos'd to proceed from the same faculty, with that, which judges of truth and falsehood. Their nature and principles have been suppos'd the same, because their sensations are not evidently different. (T. 417. See also T. 437.).

Hume's whole account has been obscured by his taking calm and violent passions as two things of the same kind, and by his faculty talk about reason. Whereas the rationalists think that there may be a conflict between reason and passion, Hume thinks that there may be a conflict between a calm passion and a violent one - a conflict which, according to him, the rationalists mistake for what they call "a combat of reason and passions". Both the rationalists and Hume are wrong here. If, as I have said following Ryle, the calm and the violent passions are two different kinds of things such as a current and an eddy are, then there cannot be a conflict between them. Two currents can conflict, but a current cannot conflict with an eddy. And against the rationalists I must say that if talk about the faculty of reason is meaningless and useless, then their talk about the combat of reason with passions is equally meaningless and useless.

Indeed, the whole controversy between Hume and the rationalists on this matter has been a nonsense. Hume says that it is easy to confound the operation of the calm passions with that of reason because "their sensations are not evidently different." As I have said, there is no sensation or upsettingness about the calm passions at all. And as I showed in the first chapter, we can hardly meaningfully talk about the faculty of reason. When these things are taken into consideration, the nonsensical character of the controversy between Hume and the rationalists becomes obvious.

The faculty of reason neither overcomes nor is overcome by the passions not because, as Hume thinks, some people confound the operation of the calm passions with that of reason, but because there is no such thing as the faculty of reason and because it is difficult to understand a calm or mild operativeness (not motivational but emotional operativeness) of certain passions. Those who make the mistake of thinking of a "combat of reason and passions" do so because they wrongly believe in the faculty of reason. And Hume's mistake is two-fold: First, he, too, like the rationalists, believes in the faculty of reason, and secondly, he wrongly thinks that an inclination can be in conflict with an agitation.

If Hume had said that making reasonings and reflection, i.e., "judging of truth and falsehood", has some similarity with the mental states which are not agitations, then he would have been right. But that would have no bearing on his controversy with the rationalists on the question of "the combat of reason and passions". I therefore conclude that Hume's use of the doctrine of calm passions as a psychological account of the rationalists' and common people's belief in "the combat of reason and passion" has been a muddled and unnecessary one.

Hume's second use of the doctrine of calm passions is in the field of moral conduct, but it has a bearing on that of conduct in general. Here again, he tries to explode the rationalist myth that the faculty of reason is the source of morality while, un-

fortunately, his own language remains in the rationalist tradition that there is such a thing as reason. But apart from his controversy with the rationalists on this subject, his constructive suggestion that the rules of morality and the impartiality of our point of view are based on "a general calm determination of the passions, founded on some distant view or reflection", on some passion for social converse or some ulterior passion, is very sensible and illuminating. Let us see what Hume says about this special way in which the calm passions operate.

In his discussion of "the origin of the natural virtues and vices" (Treatise, Book III, Part III, Section I), while replying to the question why our sentiments of morals do not vary when the sympathy on which they rest varies because of the "continual fluctuation of our situation, with regard both to persons and things", Hume points out that were we to consider people only from our "peculiar point of view" it would lead us to "continual contradiction". Hence we "fix on some steady and general points of view." (T. 581-582). If we have to judge people from their relation to us, then, since such personal factors constantly change, it would lead to confusions and disorder. To overcome this difficulty we frame "certain general rules of morality", so that we take an impartial point of view.

When we form our judgments of persons, merely from the tendency of their characters, to our own benefit, or to that of our friends, we find so many contradictions to our

sentiments in society and conversation, and such an uncertainty from the incessant changes of our situation, that we seek some other standard of merit and demerit, which may not admit of so great variation. (T. 583).

Such an invariable and impartial standard, Hume admits, it is difficult to practice: " 'tis seldom we can bring ourselves to it." Here we mistake the need of having and using the impartial standard as a requirement of reason whereas, in fact, it is simply a calm determination of the passions.

'Tis seldom men heartily love what lies at a distance from them, and what no way redounds to their particular benefits; as 'tis 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 'tis seldom we can bring ourselves to it, and that our passions do not readily follow the determination of our judgment. This language will be easily understood, if we consider what we formerly said concerning that reason, which is able to oppose our passion; and which we have found to be nothing but a general calm determination of the passions, founded on some distant view or reflection. (T. 583).

To confuse the operation of calm passions, that is, the use of certain rules of conduct, a certain objective and impartial standard, with the operation of the faculty of reason which is "cool and disengaged" involves an abuse of language. This is what is "vulgarly called reason". (T. 419). In the Enquiry Hume clearly states this:

Our affections, on a general prospect of their objects, form certain rules of conduct, and certain measures of preference of one above another: and these decisions, though really the result of our calm passions

and propensities, (for what else can pronounce any object eligible or the contrary?) are yet said, by a natural abuse of terms, to be the determinations of pure reason and reflection. (E. 239).

Let us note that if there is no faculty of reason, then the rationalists are mistaken ab initio in thinking that the rules of morality are "determinations of reason". The very attempt to prove or disprove that the faculty of reason determines our moral conduct is wrong. On this count both the rationalists and Hume are equally guilty. But Hume's superiority over his rationalist opponents lies in the fact that he clearly realizes that actions and decisions, both moral and nonmoral, presuppose attitudes and desires. He also comes to see that moral conduct proper is not a matter of desire alone, but that such a desire or preference has to be supported by considerations of and reflections upon facts. Moral conduct depends on "a general calm determination of the passions, founded on some distant view or reflection." I shall discuss Hume's views on morality in detail in the second part of the enquiry.

It is an appropriate place to consider how some philosophers have misunderstood Hume. Baier, for example, in criticizing Hume's view that our end is not determined by reason but by passion, maintains that there are cases which indicate that the agent often frustrates his strongest and most persistent passion in order to gain an end which is determined by good reasons. Let us take two cases from Baier:



- (1) A great deal of Jones's behaviour, his going on long and dangerous missions, giving many parties, drinking a lot, may be explained by his end: curing himself of his love, which is his strongest and most persistent sentiment, passion, or desire. Yet, his end is to rid himself of it, and his behaviour is explained in terms of the end he is aiming at. Hence, it cannot be his passions which determine his end, for his end is not the satisfaction, but the frustration, of his most obtrusive passion.<sup>1</sup>
- (2) It may be my end to track down the murderer although I know that it is my brother and although I dread the moment when I shall succeed. In one sense of 'desire' and 'want', I do of course desire and want to find him, for it could not be my end to find him if I did not (in any sense) desire or want to find him. But in another, more obvious, more literal sense, I do not want or desire to find him. I abhor, I dread, I hate to think of the moment of success. Nevertheless, I overcome all this in pursuing my end.<sup>2</sup>

To see how Baier has misunderstood Hume, or, at least, has not taken a complete account of his philosophy, let me point out the following. (1) Hume does maintain, as we shall see (pp. 176-177 below) that the agent cannot justify his ends by means-end type of reasons. When a supposed end can be justified by the agent by such reasons, then it is no longer his end or his ultimate end, but merely a means or a preliminary end. Ends are chosen for their own sake.

(2) As I have said in this chapter, Hume holds that people sometimes act from a "settled principle of action", and such a principle may be formed by a "calm desire". Such a principle of action may be to "fix on some steady and general points of view" while

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<sup>1</sup>K. Baier, The Moral Point of View, p. 264.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 263.

ignoring one's "peculiar point of view" which often leads to "continual contradiction". To overcome confusion and disorder we frame "certain general rules of morality", take an impartial point of view. This is what Hume calls "a general calm determination of the passions, founded on some distant view or reflection." Such a calm determination of our desires may also result in "a predominant inclination" to avoid doing foolish acts. Hume clearly recognizes that the desires may be "corroborated by reflection and seconded by resolution." Now, when an agent has formed his settled principle of action as that he should not act foolishly, he may act like Jones (Baier's first case) when he comes to realize that the lady whom he loves does not reciprocate or is already married. And when his settled principle is to act from an impartial point of view or to follow certain general rules of morality, he may track down his brother who is a murderer.

Now, it seems to me that Hume does not deny that our ends and actions are often determined by what Baier calls "good reasons". Such good reasons, as I understand from Baier's examples, are that one should not act from a partial point of view, that one should not act foolishly, that one should not hesitate to hand over the murderer to the police even if he is one's brother, that one should not try to love a girl who is married or does not reciprocate, etc. Someone who accepts such good reasons realizes that he should not do any of those things not because by so acting he would fulfil

some of his ends, but because these are his principles or follow from his principles. He finds, on reflection, that these are recommended by his settled principle of action or his predominant inclination. These are the sorts of thing he really likes or desires. He does not like to live in a "continual contradiction". When his acts are guided by his good reasons, then his strongest desire ("strongest desire" in the appropriate sense which I have attributed to Hume) is to be so guided. This is how Hume could reply to Baier. He could say that what Baier calls good reasons are not means to an end but ends in themselves. Jones' reason for getting rid of his love is not a means to something else but implies his ultimate desire to avoid unhappiness. If Jones desires to get rid of his futile love not because such a love is against his principles but because this would fulfil some of his ends, then "to get rid of love" is not an end but merely a means. Similarly, if the person who desires to track down his brother does so not because his settled principle of action is to act in such an impartial manner but because this would lead to some other end of his, then "tracking down the brother who is a murderer" is not an end but merely a means.

Considering Baier's criticisms in the above manner I do not see that he has established anything against Hume. His phrase "good reasons" is merely another expression for Hume's "general calm determination of the passions, founded on a distant view or

reflection" or "impartial point of view", etc. Hume has made a few more factual assertions which are matters of common experience. He rightly says, "'tis seldom we can bring ourselves to" an impartial point of view (T. 583). Or, "...there is no man so constantly possessed of this virtue, as never on any occasion to yield to the sollicitations of passions and desire." (T. 418). Indeed, people who can track down their brother who is a murderer knowing that he would be executed are very rare.

It is now necessary to observe the following: I suppose that Hume would be inclined to explain Jones's conflict or the conflict of the person who wants to track down his brother who is a murderer as a conflict between two passions: one violent (the desire to love in Jones's case, or the desire to let the brother remain free in the other case) and another calm desire (to frustrate his love in Jones's case or to track down the brother in the other case). Hume would be wrong in this sort of explanation, because, as I have tried to show following Ryle, there cannot be a violent passion which is also a desire, and a desire cannot be calm or mild in emotional quality. What Hume would have to say, and could consistently say, is this: Jones is in conflict between two desires. One of them is what he introspectively considers to be more intense than the other, but in fact it is the weaker one because it does not lead to action. The stronger one, which causes action, is what coincides with his settled principle of action. Hume could say the same sort of thing

about the second case. (It is obvious that Hume's acceptance of this position would not affect his reply to Baier.) It may be recalled here that the senses of "stronger desire" (also "strongest desire") which I attributed to Hume in the last chapter are these :

(1) The desire which the agent, on reflection, reports to be the more intense one. (2) The desire which leads to action, or will lead to action when other things are equal. The stronger desire which causes an action in a situation of conflict is necessarily the "stronger desire" in the second sense. It may or may not be the stronger desire in the first sense of "stronger desire".

I think that what at first appears to be a quarrel over a philosophical issue between Hume and his critics is really a verbal one. If we agree with Hume to restrict the use of the term "reason" to a faculty which makes deductive and inductive reasonings, or by avoiding Hume's muddled faculty talk, if we use "reasons" only for deductive **and inductive inferences**, judgments and beliefs, then the kind of conduct which Hume's critics describe as "due to reason" is not so except incidentally. Such actions are not directly caused by reasons but by some desires, although, Hume would grant, these may be aided by the agent's beliefs and reflection, i.e., reasons. These desires, when "corroborated by reflection and resolution", form general rules of conduct, an objective, impartial point of view. As motives they may be very strong. On the other hand, if we grant to Hume's critics an

extension of the term "reason" as an impartial sentiment to follow general rules, or something like this, then of course actions can be determined by reason, and in this sense, can be called "reasonable" or "rational". But we must remember that whatever course we may adopt Hume is not guilty of any logical error. If we use the word "reason" in his restricted manner, then we have to grant him that it is improper to call the forming of "certain general rules", "an impartial standpoint" and being guided by them as "due to reason". Let me quote here Macnabb's objection to Hume as a further illustration of the point at issue.

I regard Hume's account of "that reason which is able to oppose our passion"...by generalizing it in the interests of stability, coherence and the intelligibility of language, as one of the most valuable suggestions to be found in his philosophy. My only objection is to his saying that **this use of the term "reason"** is loose and improper. On the contrary, it seems to me that this is just the sort of mental process which we usually and properly call "being reasonable".<sup>1</sup>

Surely this cannot be considered as a philosophically important objection at all. I do not think that it is an important philosophical problem to decide how to use a certain word, in our case the words "reason" and "reasonable". What is really important is to decide what does or does not follow from the use of a word in a

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<sup>1</sup>D.G.C. Macnabb, David Hume, His Theory of Knowledge and Morality, p. 193.

particular sense. I do not see how Hume can be regarded as guilty on this count. I would rather say that Hume has done a good service by showing us that if we use "reason" or "reasons" and "reasonable" (and their correlates) only for the things which he has used them for, then the place of reason in conduct is limited, and certainly different from what Hume's rationalist opponents thought it to be.

Before I conclude the first part of my enquiry let me make a few more observations. It may be easy to be misled by Hume's language, such as that reason is the slave of passions, that it is not unreasonable or contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the world to the scratching of one's finger, and many other similar statements. One may come to think that Hume is perhaps preaching some kind of irrationalism. I think that this would be a gross misunderstanding of Hume. What he has tried to prove, and I think he has proved, is not that all our actions are unreasonable or irrational, but only that the question of reasonableness or rationality, strictly speaking, does not apply to actions, given his meaning of "reasonableness". If he had used the correlate of "reasonable" which is "rational", then he would say that actions are, properly speaking, "non-rational". This is a conclusion which we must accept if we properly understand him. The important thing is the distinction between what is theoretical and what is practical, between what can be true or false and what can

be laudable or blameworthy. This is what has come out clearly from Hume's discussion of reason and conduct.

We must also note that Hume has not denied that judgments, beliefs and reasonings (i.e., the things which, he thinks, can be reasonable or unreasonable) have a role in conduct. These have a very important place in our actions. Without these, the kind of actions, which Hume considers, cannot even occur. These accompany our actions. And if there is any sense in which actions can be reasonable or unreasonable, then it is because of the reasonableness or unreasonableness of these accompanying beliefs or judgments. Such judgments or beliefs about existence of objects or about means to ends (reasons) do have a justificatory role too; but they justify only the agent's adopting his means, and not his ends. Thus in Hume's philosophy, reason does have a role to play in conduct. But Hume would insist that this does not make his rationalist adversaries victorious. This in no way shows that reason can and ought to rule over passions. If without a desire, a belief or a judgment cannot produce an action, then the demand to be motivated by a belief alone (without a desire), or to subsume a desire under a belief, would be pointless. However, Hume's rationalist opponent might reply that his notion of a faculty of reason is different from Hume's. It is broader than the one which makes only demonstrative and inductive inferences. If the controversy now takes this direction, then neither the rationalists



nor Hume would be able to prove anything. As I said, one can attribute anything to the faculty of reason in the absence of our knowledge of what this faculty is. I think that to see the value of Hume's philosophy it is better to ignore his quarrel with the rationalists and take his points independently of his controversy with them.

PART TWO

REASON AND (SPECIFICALLY) MORAL CONDUCT  
IN HUME'S PHILOSOPHY

PART TWO: REASON AND (SPECIFICALLY) MORAL  
CONDUCT IN HUME'S PHILOSOPHY

SYNOPSIS

VII. THE PLACE OF REASONING IN MORALS: SEVEN  
ARGUMENTS OF HUME

A symmetry between Hume's discussion of the place of reason in conduct generally and that of the place of reason in specifically moral conduct. A note on Hume's expression "Moral distinctions [are] not deriv'd from reason". Argument 1:- As Hume has stated it, the argument is invalid. My reformulation of the argument: it shows that moral rules and judgments are not conclusions of reasoning. Reply to Raphael's objection. Raphael talks in an even more obscure language than Hume's. Argument 2:- As Hume has stated it, it is obscure. My reformulation of the argument. The reformulated version establishes that the moral merit or demerit of an action has nothing to do with "reasonableness" and "unreasonableness" in Hume's sense of these epithets. Argument 3:- It is not a main argument but merely a reply to Wollaston's view that the falsehood of a judgment which accompanies an action is the foundation of moral deformity. The argument rightly underlines the distinction between two questions, namely, whether an action is moral and whether an action is reasonable or intelligent. Argument 4:- It shows that reasonings and beliefs do not constitute the sufficient condition for reaching a moral decision, but it does not deny that they may be necessary conditions. Hume's presentation of the argument in his faculty language and some philosophers' criticism in an equally obscure language. My presentation of the argument without Hume's faculty talk. Argument 5:- It tries to establish that moral judgments originate in a manner similar to that of aesthetic appreciation. It is an analogical argument, and hence not conclusive. Argument 6:- It tries to establish that moral distinctions are not discerned by reasonings of either type (demonstrative or inductive). A consideration of the argument step by step. Kovesi's criticism of the first part of the argument is misplaced. An examination of Kovesi's criticisms of the distinction between facts and values. The fact-value distinction breaks out within Kovesi's "formal element". A consideration of Broad's and Raphael's criticisms. The

second part of the argument is supposed to prove that we do not arrive at our notions of vice and virtue by inductive reasonings; but, instead of this, Hume argues as if his point is that we cannot "perceive" vice or virtue. This confusion in Hume has given his critics an opportunity to criticize him. My attempt to show that the second part of the argument is valid when it is properly reformulated. Argument 7:- It makes a number of claims: the only one which is correct is that when we choose to do virtuous acts we have a pro-attitude towards doing such acts. The logically good reason to be virtuous is that we desire to be so. Hume has not been refuted by the criticisms of Broad and the rationalists. Baier's and Broiles' criticisms are misplaced. My arguments that Hume is not a psychological hedonist. Baier's and Broiles' claim that ends can be accounted for by "good reasons": Hume's alternative account of this claim.

#### VIII. THE FINAL ARGUMENT OF THE TREATISE: HUME ON "IS" AND "OUGHT"

The standard interpretation of the "is-ought" passage is correct as far as it goes, but it fails to note how the passage is connected with argument 6. MacIntyre's interpretation that Hume is claiming here that the transition from "is" to "ought" is difficult but can be made, is wrong. Arguments against MacIntyre. Kydd's interpretation: Statements about "obligation" or "ought" cannot be derived from statements containing any other moral term. Broiles' acceptance of this interpretation and his additional remark that "ought"-propositions cannot also be derived from any factual proposition. Both Kydd and Broiles are wrong. My arguments against them. Broiles' muddled formulation of Hume's account of promising. Kydd's and Broiles' interpretation is based on a misunderstanding of Hume's notion of moral judgments. The status of the statements about "moral obligation" and that of statements containing other moral terms are basically the same in Hume's philosophy. Kydd and Broiles fail to see that the passage is connected with argument 6. The correct interpretation: "ought"-propositions or propositions containing moral terms cannot be derived from "is"-propositions - this is supported by the nature of both demonstrative and inductive reasonings. Hume's commentators' failure to notice this is due to the presence of a muddle, the same muddle which is present in the second part of the sixth argument. An examination of Searle's

counter-example to Hume's thesis about the fact-value distinction.  
Searle's argument is invalid because an evaluative element  
surreptitiously enters into one of the steps of the argument.  
Summary and conclusion.

## VII

THE PLACE OF REASONING IN MORALS: SEVEN  
ARGUMENTS OF HUME

In the first part of my enquiry I confined myself to Hume's discussion of the place of reason in actions generally, saying almost nothing about his views on the place of reason in specifically moral conduct. In this part I intend to discuss this. Here my main purpose is to interpret (when necessary) and examine those arguments of Hume which are designed to show that we do not make our moral distinctions by reason and that when we choose virtue as an end, our choice is not made by reason. I shall also examine some criticisms of Hume's argument. I shall not be concerned, except incidentally, with his positive view about how we make moral distinctions by a moral sentiment. I shall try to give a complete account of his arguments as they are presented both in the Treatise and in the Enquiry. Some of the arguments are the same in both the works. I shall arrange their sequence in my own manner to facilitate my enquiry. I believe that this will not in any way affect Hume's points.

It may be well to reiterate what I said earlier about the two different senses in which Hume has used "reason" in his studies of induction on the one hand, and actions and morals on

the other. In the first, "reason" refers to a faculty responsible for making only deductive arguments while in the second "reason" refers to a faculty which makes both deduction and induction. This change in meaning of "reason" does not create any special difficulty. But what does create a difficulty is Hume's faculty talk about reason. If we take Hume's use of "reason" as referring to a faculty, then most of his arguments remain obscure. Indeed, if we intend to judge Hume's arguments, as they are expressed (i.e., in a faculty language), and in the light of his controversy with his rationalist opponents, then we enter into an obscure area. We then have to judge whether or not the faculty of reason makes moral distinctions. This, in itself, is neither intelligible nor interesting; it seems meaningless to me. As I have said in the first chapter, there is no such thing as the faculty of reason. So there is no such question as whether or not the faculty of reason can make distinctions between good and bad, right or wrong. Also, there is no such question as whether or not one's adherence to virtue is due to one's faculty of reason. In view of what I have just said, it may be tempting to reject Hume's arguments outright. But this will be a mistake, because in his presentation of some of the arguments, his real point is that moral distinctions are not arrived at by way of deductive and inductive reasonings and empirical beliefs. And he has said many philosophically important things in these arguments. One of my main concerns will be to free his arguments from his

faculty talk. My reformulation of his arguments will be intended to free them from obscurity and to find whatever valuable things there are in them. I shall reformulate his arguments only when it is necessary to do so, and even when I do this, I shall try to present them keeping them as close as possible to his intended meaning.

There is a symmetry between Hume's discussion of the place of reason in conduct generally, and that of the role of reason in specifically moral conduct. Just as reason plays a subsidiary role in conduct, so here in matters of moral distinctions reason remains equally subordinate to passions and feelings. His conclusion about the place of reason in conduct which I have discussed in the first part of my enquiry, is now used to show the impotence of reason in the origination of moral rules and judgments.

Before I proceed to discuss Hume's arguments, I must make one comment on the expression of his claim in the Treatise, that "Moral Distinctions [are] not deriv'd from Reason". (T. 457). It may be easily taken as "Moral distinctions are not caused by reason." In this sense, it is a very odd thing to say. Surely a distinction is not the sort of thing which can be an effect. However, as it will appear from my discussion of his arguments, what he really means by this is that the moral rules and judgments of good and bad, right and wrong are not the kind of things which we obtain



and to which we adhere by reasonings. I shall now take up Hume's arguments.

Argument 1 :- This argument is stated in the Treatise (T. 456-457). As Hume puts it, "Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions. Reason of itself is utterly impotent in this particular. The rules of morality, therefore, are not conclusions of our reason". (T. 457). Stated in this way, the argument is not valid. First of all, it is not clear how the term "morals" in the first premiss is to be taken. Considering the conclusion of the argument and the general context of the discussion in which the argument appears, we may perhaps take the term to mean "moral rules and judgments". But the introduction of "conclusions of reason" in the conclusion creates another difficulty. Then again, Hume's faculty talk about reason makes the argument obscure. However, I think that the argument can be given a valid formulation while avoiding his faculty talk. Thus we may reformulate it as follows:

Whatever is a conclusion of a piece of reasoning (deductive or inductive) does not by itself produce or prevent actions.

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

Therefore, moral rules and judgments are not conclusions of reasonings.

It is true that this reformulated version is not quite the same as Hume's argument, but it seems to me that it is not far from Hume's

intended meaning. I think that in view of what I said earlier (pp. 32-38 above) regarding Hume's view that a reasoning by itself cannot cause an action and that a desire is the immediate cause of an action, the first premiss will be accepted. It is a very plausible premiss, and I do not think that there is a single case which goes against it. However, there are problems about the second premiss. It may be said that there is an inconsistency between this premiss and what Hume says about causation of actions. If a desire is the immediate cause of an action, then moral rules and judgments, which are not desires, cannot directly cause actions. And, if it is said that although moral rules cannot directly cause actions, they may nevertheless arouse a desire to act, then it may be pointed out that in this indirect manner reasonings also cause actions. As we have seen, Hume does not deny an indirect influence of reasonings on actions. Then what is the difference between reasonings and moral rules as far as their influence on actions is concerned? I think that this difficulty can be removed if we note Hume's view of moral rules. I have said in connection with his doctrine of calm passions that moral rules and judgments and our adherence to them, according to Hume, are due to the operation of a calm desire or sentiment or an ulterior passion or a passion for social converse. They are, in other words, expressions of a certain desire. A desire which is expressed in a certain form may cause actions. In this sense we may say that moral rules and judgments

may cause actions. It is true that the main job of moral rules and judgments is practical, i.e., to influence conduct. This is evident from the way they are expressed. As Stevenson says, "...doubtless there is always some element of description in ethical judgments, but this is by no means all. Their major use is not to indicate facts, but to create an influence."<sup>1</sup> In this respect, reasonings and conclusions of reasonings (deductive or inductive) are different. Their primary function is not to influence conduct, although they may serve our desires and thus indirectly play a role in conduct. Hume also supports the second premiss in some such manner. He says:

If morality had naturally no influence on human passions and actions, 'twere in vain to inculcate it; and nothing wou'd be more fruitless than that multitude of rules and precepts, with which all moralists abound. Philosophy is commonly divided into speculative and practical; and as morality is always comprehended under the latter division, 'tis supposed to influence our passions and actions, and to go beyond the calm and indolent judgments of the understanding. And this is confirm'd by common experience, which informs us that men are often governed by their duties, and are deter'd from some actions by the opinion of injustice, and impell'd to others by that of obligation. (T. 457).

We may note that here Hume does not say that moral rules and judgments must always cause actions. He says that men are often governed by their duties. That moral rules and judgments, as express-

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<sup>1</sup>C.L. Stevenson, "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms", Readings in Ethical Theory, ed. Sellars and Hospers, p. 419. See also his Ethics and Language, for instance, pp. 13, 207.

ions of desires, may sometimes fail to cause actions is not strange. As Hume himself observes, "Men often act knowingly against their interest: For which reason the view of the greatest possible good does not always influence them." (T. 418). A stronger immoral desire may lead a man to act immorally even though he may have a weaker moral desire or awareness of a moral rule. I have considered this sort of situation of conflict before, and tried to show that these can be taken care of by Hume's explanatory model of actions.

There is one objection to this argument, raised by Raphael,<sup>1</sup> which we may consider here. Raphael contends that Hume has not proved his point. According to him, Hume is here concerned with showing that moral distinctions (distinctions between right and wrong) are not judged or discerned by reason, but his argument at best proves that "reason is not the moral faculty only in the sense in which 'moral faculty' means the faculty moving us to moral action, not in the sense in which it means the faculty that discerns the morality of actions."<sup>2</sup> This objection is based on a failure to grasp Hume's use of such phrases as "derived from reason", "discerned by reason" or "judged by reason." According to Hume, that which judges cannot (by itself) move one to action, and,

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<sup>1</sup>D. Raphael, The Moral Sense, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid..

therefore, that which moves cannot judge. Thus, "moral faculty" (if we are allowed to replace "morals" by this phrase in Hume's first premiss, "Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions"), being something which moves one to action cannot also be something which judges. This is Hume's complete bifurcation of theoretical from practical matters. Raphael's objection is really against the premiss that whatever is derived from reasonings does not move, and not against the validity of the argument. So, his statement that "Hume's argument is invalid, quite apart from the doubtfulness of the premisses" is not accurate; at least, it does not apply to my formulation of Hume's argument. However, the question of the doubtfulness of the premisses is an important one. But, from what I have said above about the premisses, they seem to be sound.

I find such phrases of Raphael as "reason as the moral faculty meaning the faculty moving us to moral action" and "reason as the moral faculty meaning the faculty that discerns the morality of actions" very obscure. If, in Raphael's manner, we consider Hume's argument as concerned with the question whether there is a faculty of reason which is also a faculty which judges right and wrong, then it must be noted that the important thing is not whether Hume has settled this question, but that there is no such question to be settled. Talk about the faculty of reason and further talk (like Raphael's) about such a faculty which has one part of it

which judges morality, another which judges truth and falsehood etc. are nonsensical. I think that if we intend to find out what is valuable in such arguments of Hume, then the better course to adopt is to dig up their meaningful contents from such obscurity, and not to criticize them in an even more obscure language such as Raphael uses.

Argument 2:- This is a main argument and is linked up with what I said about Hume's distinction between the theoretical and the practical fields in the first part of this enquiry. The argument appears in the Treatise (T. 458). Hume argues as follows:

Reason is the discovery of truth or falsehood. Truth or falsehood consists in an agreement or disagreement either to the real relations of ideas, or to real existence and matter of fact. Whatever, therefore, is not susceptible of this agreement or disagreement, is incapable of being true or false, and can never be an object of our reason. Now, 'tis evident our passions, volitions, and actions, are not susceptible of any such agreement or disagreement; being original facts and realities, compleat in themselves, and implying no reference to other passions, volitions and actions. 'Tis impossible, therefore, they can be pronounced either true or false, and be either contrary or conformable to reason. (T. 458).

Hume next points out that since passions, actions and volitions are neither true nor false, i.e., not objects of reason, it follows that their moral merit or demerit has nothing to do with reason.

The argument, as quoted above, is obscure in certain respects, and, further, here his preoccupation with only one aspect of his

theory of truth makes the argument unsound. But I think that the main point of the argument is true. This can be brought out by a slight alteration in the argument. First let us note the difficulties in Hume's formulation of the argument. Here Hume tells us that truth or falsehood consists in an agreement or disagreement to real relations of ideas or real matters of fact, but it is not said of what this agreement or disagreement is. This is perplexing since agreement or disagreement is always between two terms. Secondly, it is very difficult to be sure why he has italicized the word "real" twice. Let me take the following:

An example of proposition concerning relations of ideas: " $2+2 = 3$ ".

An example of propositions concerning matters of fact: "All crows are white".

Here the questions are: (1) Is it reason (a faculty) which disagrees with the propositions " $2+2 = 3$ " and "All crows are white"? Or, (2) is it that, in the first proposition there is a disagreement between the "idea" of " $2+2$ " with that of " $3$ ", and in the second, a disagreement between the idea of "crow" and that of "whiteness"? If (1), then what does it mean to say that reason disagrees (or agrees) with " $2+2 = 3$ " or with "All crows are white"? An intelligible answer is impossible in view of Hume's use of the concept of a faculty of reason here. If (2), then one must see that at least in terms of Hume's theory of impressions and ideas, according to which an idea is nothing but a mental image or copy,

it is impossible to make sense of how the idea of "2+2" can be in disagreement with that of "3", because there cannot be any such idea (image) as "2+2" or "3", although Hume sometimes inconsistently uses the word "idea" for such notions. (For example, on p. 69 of the Treatise he refers to philosophical relations depending entirely on ideas.)

(3) There is a third possibility. Hume may be taken to mean that it is a "judgment of the understanding" which is in agreement or disagreement with something real. I think that this is what Hume means here. This interpretation can be substantiated by the fact that in another place, where Hume presents his distinction between the theoretical and the practical, he says that the opposition to truth and reason "consists in the disagreement of ideas, consider'd as copies, with those objects which they represent", and that "nothing can be contrary to truth or reason, except what has a reference to it, and ...the judgments of our understanding only have this reference." (T. 415-6, my underlining ).

Unfortunately there is a difficulty here which concerns Hume's judgments about the relations of ideas. According to his argument here, such judgments of the understanding, like judgments of matters of fact, must agree or disagree with what they are taken to represent, that is, if they are to be true or false. But such judgments or propositions (and let it be noted that Hume restricts them to those concerning "proportions in quantity and number",



i.e., mathematical propositions) do not contain copies of anything real, they do not "represent any object." For there is no way in which any object could be such as to falsify them. But, then, why has he put the word "real" before "relations of ideas" here? Considering the context of the argument a plausible answer seems to be that here he is trying to emphasize the contrast between moral "judgments" on the one hand, and judgments concerning matters of fact and relations of ideas on the other. He means that moral judgments, properly speaking, are not judgments at all, or as he puts it later, "Morality... is more properly felt than judg'd of." (T. 470). To see this let us consider the following: " $2+2 = 4$ " really is a judgment of relations of ideas. "All crows are black" really is a judgment of matters of fact. But, "Stealing is wrong" is not a judgment at all. So the word "real", as it has been used before "relations of ideas", does not refer to any object. It is now clear that if we take "judgments of the understanding" and "something real" as the two terms of agreement or disagreement, then Hume gets into difficulty with his judgments of relations of ideas which do not represent anything real.

I think that in this argument Hume is wrongly and unnecessarily insisting on using the correspondence theory of truth for both kinds of judgments of the understanding. He needs to consider the truth or falsehood of the two kinds of judgments in two different manners. He knows very well about the two ways in which the truth or falsity

of the two kinds of judgments is determined. Judgments of relations of ideas are true or false a priori, "by the mere operation of thought, without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe." (E. 25). This is his own lesson. And judgments of matters of fact are true or false empirically. They can be empirically tested and their truth or falsehood is determined a posteriori. To bring this closer to his correspondence theory of truth, on which he is insisting in the present argument, we may perhaps say that judgments of matters of fact are true or false by virtue of their agreeing or not agreeing with what is real or existent in the world, and this may be empirically verified. The upshot of the discussion is that there are two ways in which something can be true or false, and in this respect only judgments of the understanding can be true or false. We can now use this conclusion and reconstruct Hume's argument 2 in three stages as follows:

- (1) Only judgments of relations of ideas and judgments of matters of fact can be true or false.  
**Actions, passions and volitions are not judgments of any of these kinds.**  
 Therefore, actions, passions and volitions cannot be true or false.
- (2) Whatever is not true or false, or is not connected with truth and falsehood, is not reasonable or unreasonable. (This follows from Hume's way of using "reasonable" and "unreasonable".)  
 Actions, passions and volitions are neither true nor false, nor are they connected with truth and falsehood. Therefore, actions, passions and volitions are not reasonable or unreasonable.

- (3) If something is neither reasonable nor unreasonable then none of its qualities has anything to do with reasonableness or unreasonableness. Actions, passions and volitions are neither reasonable nor unreasonable. Therefore, the moral quality of actions, passions and volitions has not anything to do with reasonableness or unreasonableness.

I think that now the argument is valid. It underlines the distinction between the theoretical and the practical matters once again. But it should be noted that here the conclusion is based on Hume's restricted and arbitrary senses of "reasonable" and "unreasonable". I already discussed the arbitrary nature of his senses of these epithets. (See pp. 54-55 above.)

Argument 3:- It is presented in the Treatise (T. 459-461). In this argument Hume tries to show that the fact that a judgment "attending" an action may be true or false does not prove that the action thereby becomes moral or immoral. One kind of judgments attending actions are those which may indirectly influence conduct. These are judgments about the existence of objects or about means to ends. These may often be false, but here the mistake is only one of fact, and an action influenced by such a false judgment (e.g., "If I take the train to Perth, I shall go via Sydney") need not be morally reprehensible. Errors in the discovery of the proper means to an end are "innocent and draw no manner of guilt" upon the agent "I am more to be lamented than blamed" for such errors. To say that although a mistake of fact is not moral or immoral yet a mistake of

right is, will not do, because this already presupposes an objective right and wrong.

There is another kind of judgment which may be said to accompany our actions, e.g., "a person, who through the window, sees any lewd behaviour of mine with my neighbour's wife, may be so simple as to imagine she is certainly my own." But, Hume points out, the falsity of the judgment of the simple person obviously will not make one's action immoral. Hume makes this point only to reply to Wollaston's view that "such a falsehood [of judgments] is the foundation of all guilt and moral deformity." (T. 461). Hume makes a few interesting observations against Wollaston's view. (T. pp. 461-462, footnote). First, if the tendency to cause error were the essence of moral distinctions, then even inanimate objects could be vicious or immoral, because such a tendency takes place in these objects too. It will not do to say that inanimate objects do not possess freedom and choice, since in this context the only thing which has been recognized as making an action immoral is the tendency to cause erroneous judgments, and not freedom and choice. Secondly, there are cases where we take care to hide our intention. If the tendency to cause error is the source of immorality, then in those cases many of our actions which are recognized as immoral, would be moral. In the case of one's lewd behaviour with another's wife, if one takes precautions, such as shutting the windows so that a simple man cannot make a false judgment about the action,

or in the case of a burglary, if the burglar takes all precautions to cause no disturbance, then such actions would not be immoral. On the other hand, for the same reason, squint-sighted people would become immoral. Thirdly, when we maintain that actions associated with our judgments are virtuous or vicious on account of the truth or falsity of those judgments, we annex some antecedent rule of morals to this species of truth or falsehood. But the problem is not solved thereby, because we require to give reason for calling a falsehood immoral. It thus begs the question.

This argument (argument 3) is not a main argument. But we may notice here one important thing, namely, that Hume has kept moral considerations separate from considerations of prudence. The question whether an action is moral or immoral is different from the question whether an action is reasonable or unreasonable, intelligent or foolish. Accordingly, an action may be reasonable (that is, accompanied by a true judgment or belief) and yet immoral. It may be noted that those who would object to this separation of reasonableness from morality, by saying that in ordinary language we often use "reasonable" and "moral", "unreasonable" and "immoral" interchangeably, would not really make any point against Hume, because here Hume is not concerned with propriety of language. He could say that given his senses of the words, his conclusion follows.

Argument 4:- This argument appears in the Enquiry (pp. 289-

291). It has some similarity with the argument which I have just considered in that here, too, one of the things which Hume tries to show is that a mistake of fact is different from a mistake of right. Here Hume makes a comparison between "the disquisitions of the understanding" and moral deliberations, and thereby tries to establish that morality is a matter of sentiment and not determined by reason. In speculative sciences when one determines something, one considers the known relations and then infers some new relation. For example, in geometry one examines a triangle and the given relations of its parts in order to determine the proportions of its lines. But in morals one has to learn all the facts and all the relations before making a moral decision, and no new relation or fact is inferred: all that happens is that "a new impression" of approbation or blame, esteem or contempt is felt. As Hume puts it:

...after every circumstance, every relation is known, the understanding has no further room to operate, nor any object on which it could employ itself. The approbation or blame which then ensues, cannot be the work of the judgment, but of the heart; and is not a speculative proposition or affirmation, but an active feeling or sentiment. In disquisitions of the understanding, from known circumstances and relations, we infer some new and unknown. In moral decisions, all the circumstances and relations must be previously known; and the mind, from the contemplation of the whole, feels some new impression of affection or disgust, esteem or contempt, approbation or blame. (E. 290).

Perhaps not all philosophers will agree with Hume that in the "disquisitions of the understanding", particularly in the mathematical ones with which he expresses his point, we infer something

unknown from the known. (I am thinking particularly of Wittgenstein in the Tractatus who said that all mathematical propositions, say the same thing, namely, nothing.) But this would not seriously damage Hume's argument, since in the other variety of the disquisitions of the understanding, i.e., reasonings concerning matters of fact or inductive reasonings, we do pass from the known to the unknown.

The important point to note in this argument is that Hume here clearly indicates that reasonings have a role to play in particular moral deliberations or decisions. He admits that a decision in order to be moral must be preceded by the agent's knowledge and beliefs about "all the circumstances and relations". This is surely an admission that use of reason is a necessary condition to arrive at a moral decision proper, but this does not show (and this is the point which Hume chiefly has in his mind here) that reasonings and beliefs (reason) constitute also the sufficient condition for us to reach moral decisions, that the rationalists' thesis is a correct one. Our moral judgments or our approval or disapproval of certain characters or actions depend on feeling or sentiment, although this sentiment or feeling has to be "well-informed" in order to cause a moral decision proper. That we need something more, some feeling or sentiment, apart from having all knowledge and beliefs relevant to a character or action, in order to make a moral decision, may also be seen in the following way: one may know all the facts and relations involved in a situation and yet one may not be morally

moved. It should however be noted that such a formulation of Hume's point might not be acceptable to him. In the Enquiry, Hume makes a psychological generalization that factually informed people will have the same moral judgments or will have an approbation for the same objects because there is a moral sentiment common to mankind. (Hume however allows that there are cases where, even after being factually informed, an agent may not be moved by his moral sentiment because of his self-love. But Hume thinks that such cases are very rare.)<sup>1</sup>

Some critics of Hume think that in this argument Hume has not proved that reason (they, too, take reason as a faculty) cannot make moral distinctions, although they seem to approve of Hume's admission of a role which the faculty of reason plays in arriving at a moral choice. Thus Raphael remarks, "In this argument...

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<sup>1</sup>I agree with Stevenson that this generalization is dubious. (See C.L. Stevenson, Ethics and Language, pp. 275-276, 136). Macnabb does not agree with Stevenson (Macnabb, op. cit., pp. 193-194.) He thinks that Hume's analysis of moral terms as recommendation for universal adoption "presupposes a universal motive or motives, which will make all men accept that recommendation. Benevolence (or sympathy) [the moral sentiment] would make all men accept the same recommendations; benevolence is present, however weak, in all normal men". (Ibid., p. 194). I shall express my views on Hume's analysis of moral terms and moral judgments later. But even if it is true that when I say that "X is good or virtuous" I recommend X to all people, this does not prove that there is a common moral sentiment, although, as Macnabb (and Hume) rightly thinks that such a sentiment is presupposed in making such recommendations.



Hume allows that reason judges of fact, but has failed to prove that it may not also judge of right."<sup>1</sup> And Broad says, "...the premisses of this argument are quite compatible with the view that Reason plays a much more important part in ethics than Hume allows."<sup>2</sup> I think that these critics may be right only so long as we take "reason" to mean a faculty. But as I said in the first chapter, it is an arbitrary matter to ascribe any special power or activity to reason when we do not know what this faculty is. By taking reason to be a faculty it is easy to postulate in it, in the manner of these critics, some power which makes moral choice, and also, like Hume, to postulate other powers, which make deductive and inductive inferences. Hume's point may be made in a simple manner without the difficulties involved in his formulation of the argument. We may say that deductive reasonings and inductive reasonings (and beliefs) have certain characteristics, namely, in them we infer something from something given in a certain manner. In their character as reasonings or inferences, there is no feeling involved. But in a moral choice we do not make that kind of inference, and here we have a distinct feeling or sentiment involved. A logically impeccable reason for any moral choice cannot be obtained unless we refer to some feeling or sentiment or approbation. Hence, making a moral choice is different from making a deductive or an inductive inference. Morality is not a matter

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<sup>1</sup>Raphael, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>2</sup>Broad, op. cit., p. 112.

of reasonings alone.

Argument 5:- Hume presents this argument in the Enquiry (pp. 291-293). Here he tries to establish an analogy between morals and aesthetics. In aesthetic appreciations "all the relations are beforehand obvious to the eyes" just as in moral deliberation all the circumstances must be previously known. In the former, after all is "known", we feel "a sentiment of complacency or disgust." If we consider a circle, we shall notice that its beauty is not one of its qualities but depends upon the peculiar fabric of structure of the mind. The same is the case with moral deliberations. In Cicero's description of the actions of Verres, there is no reference to Verres' turpitude, because "Verres' turpitude" does not name a property of Verres; it refers to the feeling in the person who thinks about the actions of Verres. "...we must... acknowledge, that the crime or immorality is no particular fact or relation, which can be the object of the understanding, but arises entirely from the sentiment of disapprobation, which, by the structure of human nature, we unavoidably feel on the apprehension of barbarity or treachery." (E. 292-293).

This argument is analogical and therefore is not conclusive. However it does seem to make it very probable that moral judgments originate in a manner similar to that of aesthetic appreciations. It adds weight to Hume's other arguments which claim that morality

is not determined by reason.

Argument 6:- This argument is stated in the Treatise (T. 463-469) and a part of it is to be found in the Enquiry (E. 287-289, 293). This is perhaps the major argument which Hume presents against the rationalists. It is based on his view that there are two kinds of reasoning, those about relations of ideas and those about matters of fact. The argument is that if moral distinctions are discerned by reasonings ("reason"), then they must be determined by either of these two types of reasoning. But they are not so determined. Therefore, moral distinctions are not discerned by reasonings("reason"). I shall consider the argument step by step.

(6a). This step is concerned with the question of whether moral distinctions consist in reasonings concerning relations of ideas or demonstrative reasonings. If demonstrative reasoning is responsible for our making moral distinctions, then it must be one of the four relations (i.e., resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality, and proportions in quantity and number) which does the job. If it is one of these relations, then moral distinctions are nothing unique to human actions but something applicable to inanimate objects as well, because these relations are common to both human beings and inanimate objects.

(6a') Hume, however, allows the possibility that it could be some

other relation, not one of his list, which might be responsible for our making moral distinctions. But he imposes two conditions which such a relation must fulfil. One of these conditions is that the relation must be such that any rational being must act in accordance with it. It is not enough that such a relation should be the same for all such beings.

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

In other words, if someone is morally obliged to act in a certain way, then he will necessarily act in that way. Hume conceives the necessity here as causal. According to him, it is impossible to fulfil this condition.

One objection to this argument is that Hume's notion of obligation, as it occurs here, is an odd one. Thus Raphael contends, "When we say a man is morally obliged to act in a certain way, we do not mean he necessarily will act in that way..."<sup>1</sup> I do not think that Raphael's objection can hold, because it is based on what is ordinarily meant by such words as "obligation", whereas Hume is criticizing the rationalists who maintain, as

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<sup>1</sup>Raphael, op. cit., p. 61.

Hume points out, that the measures of right and wrong are eternal and that the effects of those relations are necessarily the same. Although Hume himself shares the view that moral judgments are necessarily practical, this is quite independent of his present argument against the rationalists. However, Raphael does not notice the valid point which Hume makes here: to show that there is a certain relation between an action and a situation is not the same as to show that one ought to do the action.

(6a") The other condition which a proposed new relation (or relations) must fulfil is as follows:

As moral good and evil belong only to the actions of the mind, and are deriv'd from our situation with regard to external objects, the relations, from which these moral distinctions arise, must lie only betwixt internal actions, and external objects, and must not be applicable either to internal actions, compared among themselves, or to external objects, when placed in opposition to other external objects. For as morality is supposed to attend certain relations, if these relations cou'd belong to internal actions consider'd singly, it wou'd follow, that we might be guilty of crimes in ourselves, and independent of our situations, with respect to the universe: And in like manner, if these moral relations cou'd be apply'd to external objects, it wou'd follow, that even inanimate beings wou'd be susceptible of moral beauty and deformity. Now it seems difficult to imagine, that any relation can be discover'd betwixt our passions, volitions and actions, compared to external objects, which relation might not belong either to these passions and volitions, or to these external objects, compar'd among themselves. (T. 464-465).

Hume compares between a case of parricide and the destruction of a parent tree by a sapling. He says that it is impossible to find any relation which would stand between a parricide and his external

situation in which he acts but would not stand between a sapling and its killing of the parent tree by outgrowth. In the Enquiry Hume gives Nero as an example of a parricide.

This argument has been criticized by several philosophers. Kovesi argues<sup>1</sup> that moral notions, such as those of vice and virtue, are a matter of following rules, and these rules are rules for our behaviour. Non-human objects cannot form moral notions, since they cannot follow rules in the way required for having moral notions. "If Hume's oak trees had formed the notions of parricide and murder their lives would be governed by rules as well as by the 'laws of nature' ".<sup>2</sup> I wish to dwell on Kovesi's criticism of Hume at a certain length since it is connected with his further criticism of Hume's distinction between facts and values. I shall here anticipate a few things which I shall discuss in the second part of Hume's present argument and in the third part of the thesis. First of all, the above-mentioned objection of Kovesi does not seem to affect Hume's claim that moral distinctions are not derived from demonstrative reasoning. Hume argues that demonstrative reasonings are concerned with relations of ideas, and that therefore if moral distinctions were a matter of this species of reasoning, then they would depend on some relation. To refute Hume, it seems, one would

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<sup>1</sup>J. Kovesi, Moral Notions, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

have to point out the sort of relation which he demands, or else one would have to show that his notion of demonstrative reasoning is wrong. But Kovesi does not do any of these things.

However, it seems that Kovesi tries to bypass this problem by claiming that the rule-following activity which (according to him) is involved in forming moral notions is essentially a rational activity. As he says, "...the very activity of following a rule is a rational activity."<sup>1</sup> "Not only non-moral but also the moral notions are formed by reason; what I mean by this is that the rule-following activity which is essential for the formation of any notion is the same type of rational activity in both cases."<sup>2</sup> Thus, according to Kovesi, the formation of the moral notions, such as, vice and virtue, is a rational activity. This, he would perhaps claim, goes against Hume's view that moral distinctions are not derived from reason. (Note that this would still not show what is wrong with Hume's notion of "reason", and specifically **demonstrative reason** or reasoning which concerns the argument of Hume which we are considering. However, to facilitate discussion, I shall ignore this problem.) Now, if this is what Kovesi means, then there are other problems for him. He has to show what is so rational about following rules. The word "rational", when directly used for actions, is an evaluative word. (Hume's use of such words

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 71-72.

as "rational" or "reasonable" is quite different. He uses "reasonable" directly not for actions but for judgments, beliefs, etc. For him "reasonable" means "true", and the claim that a judgment is reasonable or true can, at least in principle, be settled. But, as I shall show in the third part of the thesis, it is impossible to settle the question of the reasonableness of an action.) Hence the question arises as to why that kind of activity is rational. As for the problem of the rationality of rule-following activity, I have already argued that there is nothing essentially rational about following rules, that following rules is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for rational conduct. (See above pp. 66-69.)

Kovesi, however, is trying to break down the very distinction between facts and values, description and evaluation, so that, I suppose, he would object to my assumption that he is using the word "rational" in a merely evaluative way. It seems to me that his attack on Hume in the present context and elsewhere is merely an attempt to sharpen his main point which is that the distinction between facts and values is a mistaken one, the proper distinction being that between what he calls "material element" and "formal element". As he says, "The way in which we move from the material element to what we claim a thing or act or situation to be is what has often been confused with the 'move from description to evalua-



tion.' "<sup>1</sup> According to him, to understand such acts or situations as involving certain notions, for example, vice, virtue, murder, etc., what we need is the formal element. It is this formal element of murder, for example, which makes certain (different) pieces of human behaviour, e.g., driving a knife into the victim's heart, strangling him, pushing him over the cliff, etc. into acts of murder.<sup>2</sup> His notion of formal element is further expounded in these words: "...we know what this object is only in so far as we know that this is the same as that, and that and that."<sup>3</sup> If asked about how we come to form the notion of "rational activity", I suppose, Kovesi would say that just as in the case of the formation of any notion, here, too, we need the formal element, that is, the element which would enable us to see that this rational activity is the same as that, and that and that.

But I do not see how Kovesi can succeed in breaking down the distinction between evaluation and description by introducing his notions of formal and material elements. It may be true that by following rules, by being able to see how this is the same as that, and that and that, i.e., by the formal element we are able to understand which cases are cases of murder or vice or virtue or rational activity. But what happens to the feeling of approbation or dis-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

approbation, the pro- or con-attitude, which is inevitably involved in the uses of the "Janus-words"<sup>1</sup> (which have both a descriptive as well as a laudatory or pejorative force), such as "murder", "vice", "virtue", "rational activity", etc.? It seems to me that Kovesi's theory of formal and material elements does not take proper care of this element of feeling or attitude. By the formal element of vice for example, someone may perhaps understand that this act of vice is like that, and that and that, but this does not give us a complete account of what one means when one says that a certain act is vicious.

I find Kovesi's distinction between "material" and "formal element" very obscure. He is of course right in pointing out that many of our notions cannot be elucidated in terms of immediately observable qualities, or by noticing Humean "impressions". So far he is right in saying "murder is not a perceivable object in the world, nor does it consist of perceivable relations between objects." (Kovesi says this in criticism of the second part of the sixth argument which I shall consider very soon.) But nor is electric force a perceivable object or consist of perceivable relations between objects. One can reject a positivistic or operationalist philosophy of science without rejecting the fact-value distinction.

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<sup>1</sup>I borrow this useful term from Nowell-Smith. See P.H. Nowell-Smith, Ethics, pp. 100, 107.

The legal concept of murder is a factual one, even though not analysable in terms of perceptible qualities. (One has to refer to legal statutes, common law precedents etc.) The moral concept of murder is an evaluative one. That is one might say "I don't regard this as murder (say, a mercy killing) even though from the strictly legal point of view it is murder." Now I suppose that both the legal and the moral concepts of murder are formal ones in Kovesi's sense. The fact-value distinction breaks out within his "formal element", and hence the material-formal distinction does nothing to shed light on the matter.

Kovesi has some good hits at ways in which philosophers in the past have made the distinction, e.g. Moore's consideration of "yellow" versus "good" or Hume's challenge to find some perceptible quality (which I shall soon discuss), as though a non-perceptible quality could not perfectly well be factual and non-evaluative. But this does not show that there is not a perfectly sensible distinction, even though some philosophers have not explicated it as clearly as they might have. Kovesi's account seems only to shed darkness (because of what I said earlier that the fact-value distinction breaks out within Kovesi's "formal element").

Kovesi is in a sense right when he says "if our subject matter is the relationship of an acorn to an oak tree, as one destroys the other according to the laws of plant physiology and

chemistry, not even the strongest attitude of disapproval on our part could turn this into a notion about which we could form a moral notion."<sup>1</sup> Hume has overlooked the pointlessness of morally condemning involuntary or non-voluntary actions: moral disapproval is useful only because it affects actions. But this presupposes a utilitarian or quasi-utilitarian morality. We can imagine people having a morality which condemned inanimate objects (what about Jesus and the fig tree?). Such a condemnation can be evaluative, but it seems to me to be pointless. Hume overlooked the fact that from our moral standpoint it would be pointless to condemn the young oak tree for killing its parent. But he is correct in noting that we do not, and so though Hume has overlooked an important element in the situation (voluntariness versus non-voluntariness) what he says is true enough. The evaluative element is still necessary for "murder" if this term is to have ethical implication. Could we not imagine men who refuse to evaluate voluntary actions too? They regret them but do not condemn them. Such men would be silly in so far as condemnation is socially useful, but they can exist. Then for them "murder" would become a non-moral word (perhaps purely legalistic, or would mean simply "intentional killing"). It would cover killing in self-defence, killing for gain, mercy-killing, execution of criminals. Such a concept is possible and

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<sup>1</sup> Kovesi, op. cit., p. 25.

would be "formal" in Kovesi's sense (so far as I understand Kovesi) but would not be evaluative, as is our present (non-legalistic) concept of "murder".

It seems to me that Broad's criticism of Hume's argument here is more in the right direction. Broad argues as follows:

Nero and his mother had minds, whilst we believe that trees had not. In virtue of this difference Nero and his mother stood in a mental relation in which the trees could not have stood. And we condemn Nero in respect of his emotions and intentions towards a person who had certain emotions and intentions towards him.<sup>1</sup>

Raphael points out that Broad has succeeded in showing only that there are mental states in the case of the parricide and not in the case of the trees. But in order to refute Hume, Raphael remarks, "we must show that there are different relations in the case of the parricide or Nero, not merely that there are mental qualities or states which are not possessed by the oak or elm."<sup>2</sup> Raphael's argument does not seem to be convincing. If we grant that Nero and his mother had minds, then surely it may be allowed that there would be relations between the mental states of Nero and those of his mother. And such relations would be different from relations between non-mental states.

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<sup>1</sup>Broad, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup>Raphael, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.

However, I think that Hume has invited these difficulties unnecessarily. His main point in this argument is that moral distinctions are not discerned by demonstrative reasoning. And, as he maintains, such reasonings are concerned with only four kinds of relations mentioned in his list. It is unnecessary for him now to consider the possibility that there might be other kinds of relation which are available in matters of moral distinctions and which might be treated by demonstrative reasonings. And it seems to me that even if Hume wishes to extend the list of "relations of ideas" (which he really does not wish), there would be no relation (certainly not the relations between mental states which Broad mentions) in the moral domain which would be the "objects of knowledge and certainty". Indeed, Hume's definition of demonstrative reason is such that moral distinctions cannot be made by such reason.

(6b) This step is concerned with the question of whether moral distinctions are made by reasonings concerning matters of fact.

In the Treatise Hume states the argument as follows:

...it [morality] consists not in any matter of fact, which can be discover'd by the understanding. This is the second part of our argument; and if it can be made evident, we may conclude, that morality is not an object of reason...Take any action allow'd to be vicious; wilful murder, for instance. Examine it in all lights, and see if you can find that matter of fact or real existence, which you call vice...In which-ever way you take it, you find only certain passions, motives, volitions and thoughts...The vice entirely escapes you, so long as you consider the objects. You can never find it till you turn your reflection into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation. (T. 468-469).

In stating the same argument in the Enquiry, Hume takes ingratitude as an example of crime, and asks:

Enquire...where is that matter of fact which you call here crime; point it out; determine the time of its existence; describe its essence or nature; explain the sense or faculty to which it discovers itself. (E. 287).

Admittedly, the argument is intended to be "the second part" of the sixth argument which is designed to prove that the distinction between vice and virtue is not "discover'd by the understanding." If it were discovered by the understanding or reasoning, vice and virtue, i.e., moral distinctions, should be an object of either reasoning concerning relations of ideas or reasoning concerning matters of fact. (T. 463). But, first, vice and virtue are not the objects of the first species of reasoning. This is the first part of the argument which I have considered under (6a). Now, "the second part" should be an attempt to prove that vice and virtue are not the objects of the second species of reasoning either. But unfortunately Hume has not stated the argument quite in this manner. As he has expressed it, one may easily think that Hume is here asking us to "see" or "find", i.e., perceive vice and virtue in their instances, and that since they cannot be thus perceived, he concludes that they are not "objects of reason". The underlying assumption may be taken to be that if morality consists in reasoning concerning matters of fact, then we should be able to perceive the matters of fact called virtue and vice. This misleading formulat-

ion of the argument has occasioned a criticism from Kovesi. Kovesi argues as follows:

We cannot but agree that not only is vice not a matter of fact or real existence that we can observe, but that murder likewise is not a perceivable object in the world, nor does it consist of perceivable relationships between objects. The conclusion from this, however, is not that therefore virtue and vice, murder and kindness are not the objects of our reason. Rather what follows from this is simply that they are not the objects of our senses.<sup>1</sup>

If we take Hume's formulation of (6b) seriously, then Kovesi's criticism seems to be a valid one. Indeed, if the question is that of how we can perceive vice, then obviously the very attempt to answer it would be wrong unless the word "perceive" is used in a very unusual sense. But, in fact, (6b) is not supposed to be concerned with a question like this. As I have said (pp.18-19 above), by "reasonings concerning matters of fact" Hume means "inductive inferences". So the point of (6b) should be that we cannot arrive at our notions of moral good and evil, vice and virtue, by way of inductive inferences. In the light of this, I think that the argument can be given a valid reformulation. In inductive inferences, as Hume conceives them, we infer about unknown cases from some known cases, the unknown cases being similar to the known ones. Now, how can we make an inductive inference about vice or virtue

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<sup>1</sup>Kovesi, op. cit., p. 18.



from cases which we do not know to be vice or virtue? This seems impossible. We can make an inductive inference like the following: "X1, X2, X3 which we have so far observed are cases of vice. Therefore, the next X will also be a case of vice." But, then, we already have a notion of vice, whereas the question here is to infer vice from observed cases which we do not know to be vice. The point of the present argument is that reasonings concerning matters of fact simply do not apply to such ethical inferences.

It may be noted that this reformulation of (6b) avoids Kovesi's criticism, because here we do not have to perceive vice or virtue; the point is that reasonings concerning matters of fact are irrelevant to inferences about what is called "vice" or "virtue". Kovesi remarks that murder is not a matter of fact; according to him, strictly speaking, what should be matters of fact in Hume's sense are what Kovesi calls "the material element of a vicious act", for example, "that someone drives a knife into his victim's heart, or administers poison, or pushes him over a cliff".<sup>1</sup> This I may admit. But an admission of this does not affect my reformulated version of (6b), for even from such material elements of murder it is not possible to frame an inductive argument in order to infer vice.

I think that the argument 6, as I have restated it, is free

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 61, 4.

from the difficulties of Hume's formulation of it. Indeed, if the rationality or reasonableness of moral distinctions is to depend only on whether they are arrived at by way of demonstrative reasonings or inductive reasonings, then these distinctions are not rational or reasonable. Hume does not deny that reasoning has a part to play in matters of morals. He recognizes that when we reach a particular moral decision, we have to know "all the circumstances and relations" relevant to a case, that "much reasoning should precede", that "reflection" does take place in this manner in our making of particular moral judgments and decisions. But the point is that what we take ultimately to be virtuous or vicious (our notion of ultimate good) is not a matter of reasoning or reflection. The notions of virtue and vice themselves are not arrived at by way of reasoning.

Argument 7 :- Hume presents this argument in the Enquiry (E. 293). Let me first quote it:

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

Perhaps to your second question, why he desires health, he may also reply, that it is necessary for the exercise of his calling. If you ask, why he is anxious on that head, he will answer,

because he desires to get money. If you demand Why? It is the instrument of pleasure, says he. And beyond this it is an absurdity to ask for a reason. It is impossible there can be a progress in infinitum; and that one thing can always be a reason why another is desired. Something must be desirable on its own account, and because of its immediate accord or agreement with human sentiment and affection.

Now as virtue is an end, and is desirable on its own account without fee and reward, merely for the immediate satisfaction which it conveys, it is requisite that there should be some sentiment which it touches, some internal taste or feeling, or whatever you may please to call it, which distinguishes moral good and evil, and which embraces the one and rejects the other. (E. 293).

Here Hume is saying a number of things. First, he argues that ultimate ends (or ends against means) cannot be accounted for by the faculty of reason. The ground for this claim is that such ends cannot be justified as means to further ends. In the first sentence, "accounted for by reason" seems to mean "accounted for by the faculty of reason" whereas in the other sentences "reason why" and "ask for a reason" refer to a means-end type of reason. Hume's first sentence in the quoted passage is indeed misleading, because of his faculty talk. If there is no such thing as the faculty of reason, then it is not worth while to try to prove that something can or cannot be accounted for by such a faculty. I shall therefore regard Hume's claim that ultimate ends cannot be accounted for by the faculty of reason as a muddled and meaningless one. But it should be noted that Hume's claim that an ultimate end or an end against means cannot be justified by a means-end type of reason is a true one, because the very notion of an end is

such that it cannot be so justified. It should also be noted that here Hume does not deny that one can justify one's act of adopting a means by a means-end type of reason. In reply to the question "Why do you take exercise?", the answer "Because I want to keep myself fit" justifies the agent's taking exercise. The means-end type of reason (belief) causes as well as justifies the agent's choice of the means.

Hume has not proved here that a sentiment or feeling "distinguishes moral good and evil". But we may grant him that since to act virtuously is an end and not a means to some further end, one's choosing to do such acts cannot be justified by means-end type of reason; we choose to do virtuous acts because we desire to do so. If this is Hume's claim then its truth can be seen more clearly if we use Nowell-Smith's phrases, such as "logically good reason", "logically impeccable reason", "pro-attitude", and "con-attitude".<sup>1</sup> We give a logically good or impeccable reason (i.e., a reason which leaves no room for the question "Why do you do that?") for our having an end only when we express a pro-attitude towards the end. The logically good reason for wishing to be virtuous or to do certain virtuous acts, taking them as ends, is simply that one has a pro-attitude towards ~~virtue~~ virtue. Once this is understood, no further reason can be asked for why one chooses to be virtuous. The belief

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<sup>1</sup> Nowell-Smith, op. cit., chapter 8.

that virtue (taken as an ultimate end) has a certain characteristic is not a logically good reason to be virtuous. Unless one already has a pro-attitude towards virtue, one will not be virtuous. (This is tied up with Hume's general theory of causation of actions according to which an action must be preceded by a desire.)

I think that it cannot be denied that the logically impeccable reason for one's choosing morality or virtue depends ultimately on one's sentiment or desire. Suppose that morality consists in some relations, as the older rationalists would have us believe. Or, suppose that it consists in our "rational insight" into the value of virtue or morality, as Broad would like to argue against Hume here.<sup>1</sup> Would this show that one accepts virtue because of one's perceiving certain relations? Or, would this show that one accepts virtue because of one's "rational insight" into the value of virtue? Hume could ask Broad's virtuous man, "Why do you act virtuously?" to which he would perhaps reply, "Because I have a rational insight into the value of virtue." But this would be an admission that he already values or has a pro-attitude towards virtue. To put it in Hume's language, "it touches his sentiment." If the rationalist replies to Hume's question by saying, "Because in virtue I perceive certain relations", then Hume would further ask, "But why do you choose to act in accordance with that which consists in

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<sup>1</sup>Broad, op. cit., p. 114.

having those relations?" The logically impeccable answer can only be that he likes or desires to be virtuous, that virtue touches his sentiment. Indeed, if virtue is an ultimate end, "desirable on its own account", then the only logically good reason for being virtuous is that one has a pro-attitude towards it, or that it touches one's sentiment.

It should be noted that in this argument Hume is not equating the ultimate ends of human actions with the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain. These are simply two examples which he here chooses to facilitate the illustration of his point. In place of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain any other ultimate end of a particular action could be inserted. Thus, if the ultimate end of Shah's present action is to help his poor villagers, then the following Humean model of reason-giving process may be obtained:

Kadir: Why are you working so hard?  
 Shah : To earn more money.  
 Kadir: Why do you want more money?  
 Shah : So that I may be able to save more money.  
 Kadir: Why do you want to save more?  
 Shah : By saving more I shall establish a school in my poor village.  
 Kadir: Why do you wish to establish a school?  
 Shah : By that way I shall help my people.  
 Kadir: Why do you want to help your people?  
 Shah : Why? I just want it.

The above clarification was necessary because some of Hume's critics have shown needless concern with his examples of pleasure and pain as ultimate ends. Thus, Baier,<sup>1</sup> and following him

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<sup>1</sup>Baier, op. cit., pp. 261-276.

Broiles,<sup>1</sup> maintain that pleasure and pain are not ultimate ends, indeed that they are not ends at all because they do not fulfil the criteria of an end. Ends, according to Baier and Broiles, are things which one can gain or fail to gain, which are necessarily somebody's, and the gaining of an end is clockable, and consists in bringing something about. And "ends are not the same as what we desire or want".<sup>2</sup> But pleasure and pain do not meet these criteria. The words "pleasure" and "pain" are used to indicate how a certain person responds to certain pursuits, activities, undergoings, experiences and sensations."<sup>3</sup> Though Baier's view of pleasure seems plausible, the same cannot be said of his view of pain. However, if Hume's argument can be expressed in terms of ultimate ends other than pleasure and pain, and if he is not to be taken as a psychological hedonist, a consideration of whether pleasure and pain are ultimate ends is not important. Even if Baier's (and Broiles') view of pleasure and pain as not being ends is correct, it will not apply to a Humean argument of the sort I have presented above. Broiles suggests that in the passage where Hume presents argument 7 he expresses himself as a psychological hedonist.<sup>4</sup> Indeed Hume has often been accused of maintaining this doctrine. I shall take this occasion to remove this misunderstanding of Hume.

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<sup>1</sup>Broiles, op. cit., pp. 39-48.

<sup>2</sup>Baier, op. cit., p. 263.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>4</sup>Broiles, op. cit., pp. 42-43.

I take psychological hedonism as the theory which asserts that it is only the prospect of pleasure or avoidance of pain which motivates agents. The view is also expressed as "pleasure and pleasure alone is desired as an end."<sup>1</sup> When "psychological hedonism" is taken in this sense, Hume is not a psychological hedonist. Notice that in the passage to which Broiles refers Hume is not claiming that avoiding pain and seeking pleasure are the ultimate ends; he only says that "his hating pain" is "an [my underlining] ultimate end." As McGilvary, in connection with his discussion of Hume's altruism, rightly points out, according to Hume pleasure and pain in some cases may be the ends sought, but even in such cases it is possible to distinguish between the "anticipated pleasure" (which is the end) and the "immediate pleasantness of the anticipated pleasure" (which is the efficient cause of our seeking).<sup>2</sup> In McGilvary's words:

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<sup>1</sup>This is different from the doctrine which Broad calls "empirical hedonism" and attributes to Hume. (Broad, op. cit., p. 90.) According to empirical hedonism, it is contingent that all or most people feel approval when they contemplate what is pleasant. The connection between goodness and pleasantness is not necessary but contingent. "It is logically possible that all or most men should have been so constituted as to feel approval when they contemplated what is painful or conducive to pain in human beings. If so, character and conduct of this kind would have been good." (Ibid.)

<sup>2</sup>E.B. McGilvary, "Altruism in Hume's Treatise," The Philosophical Review, Vol. XII, 1903, p. 281.



...for Hume an idea of future pleasure prompts to action, not because it is an idea of future pleasure, but because, and only in so far as, it is at present vividly pleasant. Hume's view...is that when we are influenced by pleasure to perform an action, we always act from pleasure, not always for pleasure; and that even when we do act for pleasure, we do so because of the immediate pleasantness of the anticipated pleasure. Pleasure is not so much an inducement and allure-ment, it is rather an incentive and instigation. It is not always an end, and even when it is an end, it is such only because the pleasantness of the idea of that end is an efficient cause, in Hume's sense of cause.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., In support of his view McGilvary presents the following passage from the Treatise:

...pain and pleasure have two ways of making their appearance in the mind; of which the one has effects very different from the other. They may either appear in impression to the actual feeling, or only in idea, as at present when I mention them. 'Tis evident the influence of these upon our actions is far from being equal. Impressions always actuate the soul, and that in the highest degree; but 'tis not every idea which has the same effect. Nature has proceeded with caution in this case, and seems to have carefully avoided the inconveniences of two extremes...Nature has, therefore, chosen a medium, and has neither bestow'd on every idea of good and evil the power of actuating the will, nor yet has entirely excluded them from this influence...The effect, then, of belief is to raise up a simple idea to an equality with our impressions, and bestow on it a like influence on the passions. This effect it can only have by making an idea approach an impression in force and vivacity. (T. 118-119).

Kemp Smith agrees with McGilvary on page 142 of his book The Philosophy of David Hume. Here, following McGilvary, he writes: "Hume does not, of course, deny that pleasure and pain may themselves be the ends sought [my underlining], but even in such cases we can distinguish between the pleasure sought as end and the pleasantness of the idea of that pleasure which is the efficient cause." Here, as I have underlined, Kemp Smith does not deny that according to Hume pleasure may itself be the end sought. [Notice also that McGilvary does not deny that for Hume pleasure may sometimes be the end sought. McGilvary's view, which I take to be the right one, is that "when pleasure is an end" or "when we do act for pleasure" (i.e., pleasure may sometimes be an end), the efficient cause of seeking pleasure

As we have seen in argument 7, Hume does not deny that seeking pleasure or avoiding pain can be an ultimate end. His view is that these are not the only ultimate ends. Indeed, Hume has recognized passions (desires) which are not "founded on pleasure and pain", such as "the desires of punishment to our enemies, and happiness to our friends; hunger, lust, and a few other bodily appetites," These passions may "produce" pleasure and pain but do not arise from them. They arise from "a natural impulse or instinct, which is perfectly unaccountable." (T. 439). Then, again, he says that the calm desires "are of two kinds; either certain instincts originally implanted in our natures, such as benevolence and resentment, the love of life, and kindness to children; or the general appetite to good [pleasure], and aversion to evil [pain], consider'd merely as such." (T. 417). So, desires for ends may be not only for good (pleasure) but also for other things. There are other places, too, where Hume expresses himself without a hedonistic leaning. Thus we read, "what we commonly understand by passion is a violent and sensible emotion of mind, when any good or evil [pleasure or pain] is presented, or any object [my underlining], which, by the original formation of our faculties, is fitted to excite an appetite." (T. 437). That is to say, a passion may be aroused not only by a prospect of pleasure or pain but also by

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is the immediate pleasantness of the anticipated pleasure. This is not to deny that sometimes pleasure may be sought as an end.] But curiously, Kemp Smith goes on to say on page 164 of his book: "Pleasure and pain, for Hume...are merely the efficient causes, not the objects or ends of action." This is puzzling.

"any object". In view of such statements of Hume's it is difficult to see how he can be regarded as a psychological hedonist. However, there are passages which may mislead Hume's readers. For instance,

The passions...are founded on pain and pleasure, and... in order to produce an affection of any kind, 'tis only requisite to present some good or evil [pleasure or pain]. (T. 438).

McGilvary is inclined to interpret this in such a way that it would appear that even in case of the passions which are founded on pleasure and pain the object of the desire is not the pursuit of pleasure. Even if McGilvary's interpretation of such passages is not correct, these may be taken as lapses. It should be noticed that such passages suggesting hedonism do not occur in the Book III of the Treatise or in the Enquiry. Here again McGilvary's suggestion is important:

A higher criticism of the Treatise might try to distinguish between egoistic passages which were written first and non-egoistic passages which were written afterwards inserted without proper rewriting of older passages in the interest of complete consistency." <sup>1</sup>

We may now return to Baier's and Broiles' criticism of Hume. Actually, that pleasure or pain are not ends or ultimate ends is not their main point. Their main point is rather that ends can be accounted for by "good reasons". Their contention is that means-end type of reason, with which Hume is concerned, is only

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<sup>1</sup>McGilvary, op. cit., p. 277.

of "a provisional and incomplete sort." I have already indicated in Chapter VI that what these philosophers consider as "good reasons" are not denied by Hume. In Hume's language, such good reasons are "a general calm determination of the passions, founded on some distant view or reflection". Such a calm and considered determination of our desire may result in "a predominant inclination" to avoid doing foolish actions and also to avoid acting immorally. I shall discuss the nature and limits of justification by such good reasons in the third part of the thesis. Let us note here that the claim that our ends can be determined by good reasons does not affect Hume's point (as I have construed it) that the ultimate justification or logically good reasons for one's choosing an end (e.g., to act virtuously) is given only when one expresses a pro-attitude towards the end (e.g., doing virtuous acts). Baier and Broiles have wrongly thought that by showing that pleasures and pains are not ultimate ends, indeed that these are not ends at all, they have succeeded in refuting Hume's point. But, as I have tried to show, Hume's argument can just as well be presented by inserting some other ultimate ends in place of pleasure and pain, because Hume is not a psychological hedonist. So Hume's claim that one's choice of ultimate ends, e.g. to do virtuous acts, rests on one's desire or sentiment and not on any means-end type of reason has not been refuted.

It is time now to take up Hume's last argument in the Treatise.

Since the argument is of great consequence and involves problems of interpretation, I propose to discuss it separately in the next chapter.

## VIII

THE FINAL ARGUMENT OF THE TREATISE:  
 HUME ON "IS" AND "OUGHT"

The celebrated paragraph containing this argument (T.469-470) deserves special consideration. Many philosophers think that the fundamental problem of ethics has been expressed here. Again, some critics have tried to show an inconsistency between what Hume states here and his subsequent discussion of justice and promises. As I shall try to show, the argument in the paragraph has almost always been read out of its proper context as a result of which Hume's intention here has been missed. I shall examine the different interpretations of the paragraph, and finally suggest one which I think to be correct. Let me first quote the paragraph:

I cannot forbear adding to these reasonings an observation which may, perhaps, be found of some importance. In every system of morality which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is, and is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought, or an ought not. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this ought, or ought not, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it shou'd be observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a

deduction from others, which are entirely different from it. But as authors do not commonly use this precaution, I shall presume to recommend it to the readers; and am persuaded, that this small attention wou'd subvert all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see, that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded merely on the relations of objects, nor is perceiv'd by reason. (E. 469-470).

Henceforward I shall call this paragraph FAP (i.e., the paragraph containing the final argument.) Let us now examine the different interpretations of FAP.

1. The standard interpretation. This interpretation is given or supported by such writers as Nowell-Smith, Prior, Hare.<sup>1</sup> The gist of this interpretation is that if we accept deductive reasoning as the model of valid argument, then "ought"-statements cannot be entailed by "is"-statement. For a clear statement of this interpretation let me quote from Nowell-Smith:

Freely translated into modern terminology, what Hume means is this. In all systems of morality we start with certain statements of fact that are not judgments of value or commands; they contain no moral words. They are usually statements about God or about human nature, that is to say about what men are and in fact do. We are then told that because these things are so we ought to act in such and such a way; the answers to practical questions are deduced or in some other way derived from statements about what is the case. This must be illegitimate reasoning, since the conclusion of an argument can contain nothing which is not in the premises, and there are no 'oughts' in the premises.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Nowell-Smith, op. cit., pp. 36-38; Hare, The Language of Morals, pp. 29, 44, also his Freedom and Reason, pp. 186-187; Prior, op.cit., pp. 32-33.

<sup>2</sup>Nowell-Smith, op. cit., p. 37.

This interpretation, so far as it goes, is correct. It is a good observation that Hume is making a logical point in FAP. His statement in FAP that "ought" or "ought not" are "new relations", "entirely different" from "is" or "is not", clearly testifies to this. But the difficulty with this interpretation is that it gives only a part of Hume's intention in FAP. It does not take into account the last sentence of FAP, and FAP in its proper context. (In quoting the paragraph Nowell-Smith has omitted its last sentence.) The last sentence indicates how the argument in FAP is tied up with argument 6 (see above pp. 160-174) which, as I tried to show, was designed to prove that moral distinctions are discovered neither by demonstrative reasoning nor by inductive reasoning. Of course, the muddle which I pointed out in argument(6b) (see above pp.171-174) continues into the last sentence of FAP. In argument (6b) instead of arguing that inductive reasoning cannot show us what vice or virtue is, Hume misleadingly expressed himself as arguing as if the question was to perceive vice and virtue in their instances. Similarly here in FAP his words are "perceived by reason". Hume's point in FAP is this. That " 'is' cannot be deduced from 'ought' " is supported not only by deductive reasoning, but also by inductive reasoning or reasoning concerning matters of fact. The standard interpretation fails to see this last part of Hume's intention. There is nothing wrong with the standard interpretation as far as it goes, only it needs to be supplemented by another part of Hume's argument in FAP.



2. MacIntyre's interpretation. MacIntyre<sup>1</sup> denies the correctness of the standard interpretation. According to him, if the standard interpretation is correct, then Hume himself, in his account of justice, contravened his own prohibition. To say, like Hume, that the justification of the rules of justice lies in the fact that their observance is to everybody's long term interest is to derive an "ought" from an "is". Moreover, MacIntyre argues, "the contemporary disapproval" (I take him to refer to disapproval on the part of the proponents of the standard interpretation) of deriving "ought" from "is" seems odd in view of their approval of induction as reasonable. The proper interpretation of FAP, according to him, should be that Hume is not arguing that the transition from "is" to "ought" cannot be made, but is only saying that it is a difficult transition. The transition becomes illegitimate in the case of those who try to give morality a religious basis. But it can be made legitimately, and the rest of the Treatise is an attempt to show how it can legitimately be made.

I think that MacIntyre's arguments have been well taken care of by Atkinson, Hudson and Flew (although Flew does not specifically argue against MacIntyre).<sup>2</sup> Here let me make a few

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<sup>1</sup>A.C. MacIntyre, 'Hume on "Is" and "Ought"', Hume ed. W.C. Chappell, pp. 240-264.

<sup>2</sup>R.F. Atkinson, 'Hume on "Is" and "Ought": A Reply to Mr. MacIntyre', Hume, V.C. Chappell, pp. 264-277; W.D. Hudson, "Hume on Is and Ought", Hume, ed. V.C. Chappell, pp. 295-307; A. Flew "On the Interpretation of Hume", Hume, ed. V.C. Chappell, pp. 278-286.

additional remarks. First, the oddity which MacIntyre finds in the contemporary disapproval of Hume on induction vis-à-vis the contemporary approval of Hume on the unbridgeable gap between facts and values, would be removed if he had noticed that the problem of induction is not quite the same as that of justifying the derivation of "ought" from "is". Whereas there is a general agreement as to the goal of induction, no such agreement prevails in the field of morals. Due to this, although a deductive demonstration of induction, as Hume shows, is impossible, yet we feel that a justification of induction is necessary and that it may be possible. But this is not true about the problem of derivation of "ought" from "is". The "ought"-propositions, in the ethical context, are related to a plurality of (alternative) goals, and this frustrates any attempt to justify them. Indeed, the contemporary approval of induction as reasonable may not be well-founded. (I shall indicate in the third part of my enquiry why this is so.) But that would not prove that the standard interpretation is wrong. It seems to me that the present issue should be considered independently of the problem of induction.

In the second place, let me take up MacIntyre's claim that 'if Hume does affirm the impossibility of deriving "ought" from "is" then he is the first to perform this particular impossibility.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>MacIntyre, op. cit., p. 246.

MacIntyre thinks that Hume makes this derivation in his account of justice and suicide. We must consider the manner in which Hume allegedly performs this impossibility. MacIntyre discusses the point in the light of Hume's discussion of justice and does not take up the latter's account of suicide. Referring to the passage where Hume observes that though in an individual case of justice one may suffer, yet it is well compensated by "the steady prosecution of the rule and by the peace and order, which it establishes in society" (T. 497), MacIntyre says:

Hume is asserting both that the logically appropriate way of justifying the rules of justice is an appeal to public interest and that in fact public interest is served by them so that the rules are justified.<sup>1</sup>

MacIntyre takes this as a case of deriving "ought" from "is".

As he says:

Hume clearly affirms that the justification of the rules of justice lies in the fact that their observance is to everyone's long-term interest; that we ought to obey the rules because there is no one who does not gain more than he loses by such obedience. But this is to derive an "ought" from an "is".<sup>2</sup>

The important question here is: In what sense is this a case of derivation of "ought" from "is" ? There is a distinction between deductive justification (validation) and justification of something in relation to a given end (vindication), which Feigl

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

has rightly pointed out.<sup>1</sup> Now, the sort of justification of the rules of justice which MacIntyre is ascribing to Hume's account may be vindication and not validation. According to MacIntyre, Hume's justification of the rules of justice lies in this: if peace and order in the society is the goal of the rules of justice, then such rules are justified because a steady observance of them serves this goal. But this in no way goes against the standard interpretation according to which in FAP Hume maintains that "is"-statements cannot entail "ought"-statements. Thus MacIntyre has not shown that Hume has contravened his own position in FAP, the position which, according to the standard interpretation, is a denial of an entailment relation between "is" and "ought".

True, in the following passage Hume may be taken to recommend the prosecution of the rules of justice, i.e., he virtually says that "we ought to obey the rules", in MacIntyre's words, "because there is no one who does not gain more than he loses by such obedience":

And even every individual person must find himself a gainer on ballancing the account; since, without justice, society must immediately dissolve, and everyone must fall into the savage and solitary condition, which is infinitely worse than the worst situation that can possibly be suppos'd in society. (T. 497).

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<sup>1</sup>H. Feigl, "De Principiis Non Disputandum...?" in Philosophical Analysis, ed. Max Black. Also his "Validation and Vindication" in Readings in Ethical Theory, ed. Sellars and Hospers.

But this surely is not a case in which an "is"-statement entails an "ought"-statement. A fair reading of such passages shows only that all that Hume is doing is to express his recognition of the convergence of de facto interests and his approval of our acting in such a way which would maintain the solidarity of the society. If there is a contradiction between what he says here and his lesson in FAP, a similar contradiction also exists between his analysis of the causal relation and his use of words like "must" and "necessarily" while speaking of effects as following causes. Another case would be his posing the problem of induction and his calling induction "just" (T. 225). But if one is careful, one will be able to see that there is no contradiction in such cases. Hume is only using our ordinary locutions of "necessary relations", "just inferences", etc. subject to his interpretation of the meaning of such phrases. There is no good case for saying that Hume is "contravening his own prohibition."

As to MacIntyre's view that "the notions of entailment is read into the passage"<sup>1</sup>, I think that he has not conclusively established it. It is true that Hume has not actually used the word "entail" but "deduction", and that "deduction" has a broader meaning than "entail". (I may deduce a conclusion from a premise or some premisses, but only a statement entails another statement or a conclusion, although "A entails B" might mean "B is deducible from A".)

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 253.

But, as Flew suggested to Atkinson<sup>1</sup>, Hume's remark in FAP that "this ought, or ought not, expresses some new relation or affirmation" "entirely different" from "is" and "is not" certainly looks like a denial of entailment relation between "is" and "ought". In the case of an entailment it is impossible that some "new relation or affirmation" can be inserted in the conclusion which is not present in the premisses.

3. The Kydd-Broiles interpretation. According to Kydd<sup>2</sup> and Broiles<sup>3</sup>, in FAP Hume's argument is that statements about "obligation" or "ought" cannot be derived from statements containing any other moral term like "good", "right", "virtue", etc. They relate FAP to the argument which I have numbered (6a') (See pp. 160-162 above.) They think that FAP is merely a continuation or substantiation of that argument. Thus referring to (6a') Kydd says, "To this" Hume "adds at the end of the section, a further remark which clinches his argument."<sup>4</sup> This further remark contained in FAP, according to her, means that "propositions about obligation cannot be reduced to propositions about the rightness or virtuousness of actions... To say that an act is obligatory is not to say that it is right or good or virtuous, but that someone is obliged to do it, and there is

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<sup>1</sup>Atkinson, op. cit., p. 271.

<sup>2</sup>Kydd, op. cit., pp. 53-58.

<sup>3</sup>Broiles, op. cit., Chapter VI.

<sup>4</sup>Kydd, op. cit., p. 53.

no verb 'righted' or 'gooded' which can be used to replace 'obliged' ".<sup>1</sup> Statements about obligation expresses a relation between the thought of the act and the agent's will, and the relation is one of prompting, of moving the agent to do the act which is stated as obligatory. Judgments about obligation supply the agent with motives. Kydd links this with Hume's view that moral judgments are practical. From all this it follows that according to Hume propositions about rightness or goodness are not moral judgments; they are not practical. Only propositions about obligation are moral judgments. She seems to ascribe this position to Hume when she says:

Hume...has two arguments about the nature of moral judgments in the more narrow sense. First, they are judgments about an agent's obligation to action, and, as such, they differ from all judgments about the nature of actions, about their rightness, goodness, or virtuousness. Secondly, as judgments about obligations, they are practical judgments, that is, judgments which essentially have some effect on the agent's will.<sup>2</sup>

Broiles follows Kydd except with a slight addition. He maintains that the argument in FAP is designed to show that propositions about "ought" cannot be derived from any other moral statements, not only from any factual statements. In Broiles' words, "He [Hume] is saying that conclusions involving 'ought' cannot be derived from premisses stating only truths, even if one of these truths is a moral judgment or contain moral terms."<sup>3</sup> According to Broiles,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 53-54.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>3</sup> Broiles, op. cit., p. 89.

any interpretation of FAP should be such that it must not be inconsistent with Hume's accounts of justice and of promises where, Broiles thinks, Hume derives "ought" from "is". He says, "I believe that the standard interpretation is incorrect, and any interpretation, to be adequate, must be consistent with the main body of Hume's Treatise of Morals."<sup>1</sup>

Before I proceed to examine the main argument of Kydd and Broiles I cannot forbear pointing out a few obvious errors of the latter author. First, it is puzzling for Broiles' readers to locate a work of Hume entitled "Treatise of Morals". Secondly, an infallibility assumption is clearly present in his view that any interpretation of FAP has to be consistent with the rest of Hume's writings, as if Hume cannot make a mistake. What Flew says against one such error of Hunter's applies to Broiles: "We may dismiss [the] insistence that it is absurd to hold that Hume contradicted himself as being itself absurd."<sup>2</sup>

But is the standard interpretation really inconsistent with Hume's accounts of justice and of promises? I have tried to show that it is not inconsistent with his account of justice. Let me now examine the charge of inconsistency between the standard

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 89

<sup>2</sup>Flew, "On the Interpretation of Hume", p. 281.



interpretation and Hume's treatment of promises. I shall take this occasion to discuss Hume's account of promises in a certain amount of detail with a view to examining, in future, a tricky attempt to derive "ought" from "is".

Broiles' reading of 'Hume's argument concerning the obligation to keep promises runs as follows.

- (1) "...experience has taught us, that human affairs would be conducted much more for mutual advantage were certain symbols or signs instituted." (522)
- (2) Promises are a "certain forms of words...by which we bind ourselves to the performance of any action." (522)
- (3) Therefore we ought to keep promises. And this is certainly to derive the "ought" from the "is", and violates the standard interpretation of the is-ought passage.<sup>1</sup>

It may be recalled that the standard interpretation of FAP only denies an entailment relation between "is" and "ought". Now, does the above argument of Broiles (let us suppose for the present that it is the correct version of Hume's argument) show a valid derivation (i.e., entailment) of "ought" from "is"? Not at all. From (1) and (2) all that logically follows is that human affairs would be conducted much more for mutual advantage through the institution of promising. (Even then, to derive this conclusion, (1) and (2) would require some reformulation.) There is no rule

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<sup>1</sup>Broiles, op. cit., p. 91.

of inference by which (3) can be deduced from (1) and (2). But, aside from all this, this statement of Hume's position is not a correct version of his account of promising. It may be noted that Broiles has not given textual reference for his (3), although he has been able to supply such references for (1) and (2).

What, then, is the correct version of Hume's account of promising? According to Hume, the obligation to keep promises does not arise from our will and pleasure. On his view, morality rests on a sentiment, and a change of the obligation implies a change of the sentiment. As he says, "...a creation of a new obligation supposes some new sentiment to arise. But it is certain we can naturally no more change our own sentiments than the motion of the heavens." (T. 517). He argues that even the rationalists cannot prove that the obligation to keep promises is a matter of will and pleasure, because, on their view, morality consists in relations. And, he says:

...to will a new obligation, is to will a new relation of objects; and therefore, if this new relation of objects were form'd by the volition itself, we shou'd in effect will the volition; which is plainly absurd and impossible. The will here has no object to which it could tend; but must return upon itself in infinitum. The new obligation depends upon new relations. The new relations depend upon a new volition. The new volition has for object a new obligation, and consequently new relations, and consequently a new volition; which volition again has in view a new obligation, relation and volition, without any termination. (T. 517-518, footnote).

Hume gives a natural explanation of how the institution of

promising came into being. The motive of self-interest enlightened by experience in social life drives men to institute for their own security the custom of promising. Promises are "the conventions of men, which create a new motive, when experience has taught us that human affairs would be conducted much more for mutual advantage, were there certain symbols or signs instituted, by which we might give each other security of our conduct in any particular incident." A promise, then, "is a certain form of words...by which we bind ourselves to the performance of any action...When a man says he promises any thing, he in effect expresses a resolution of performing it; and along with that, by making use of this form of words, subjects himself to the penalty of never being trusted again in case of failure." (T.522). It will be a mistake to suppose that by this Hume means that a promise consists in just uttering a form of words or just making a statement of our intention to do something. A promise, according to Hume, is something more than that. He compares promising with "transsubstantiation, or holy orders" which arise from ritual acts; the former believed to be changing the substance of bread and wine, by the power of God, into the substance of Christ's body and blood, at the consecration in the mass; and the latter conferring the sacrament of holy orders to the new office bearer by the laying on of hands and by uttering the appropriate form of words. A promise, then, is not the mere uttering of certain words, it is a sort of ritual act. When one

says, "I promise to do x", besides pronouncing those words, one commits oneself to doing x. There is a non-informative element in a promise which may perhaps be brought out in a sentence like the following one: "Let me not be trusted again if I fail to do x."<sup>1</sup> A mere uttering of the word "promise" does not bring in the institution of promising, the important feature of which is the committal of the promiser to the obligation which it involves. In other words, the word has to be used in a certain sort of context and not merely parroted.

Now, whence does the obligation or the tendency to fulfil a promise arise? It arises from our awareness of the conveniences, of the "mutual advantage", which accrue from the making and fulfilling of promises. "Interest is the first obligation to the performance of promises. Afterwards a sentiment of morals concurs with interest and becomes a new obligation" through the artifices of the politicians, education and awareness of public interest.

This is, in short, Hume's account of promising. Now, if this is a correct formulation of Hume's account, then it is difficult to see how he has derived "ought" from "is" here. Notice that Hume is not moralizing here. He is giving us a sociological and psychological description of the institution of promising. Perhaps Hume's recognition of a moral obligation in respect of promising has led some to see a derivation of "ought" from "is". But, then, the meaning of "obligation" and "moral obligation" in this context

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<sup>1</sup>Here I am indebted to Prior, Logic and the Basis of Ethics, p. 53.

has to be clearly understood. Obligation here is a tendency or desire to do something, the tendency being roused from some motive of mutual advantage or interest. The moral obligation which arises from the influence of politicians, education, etc., may itself serve as a motive to fulfil promises. But, clearly, to say that we recognize moral obligations in this way is not the same as saying "One ought to keep one's promises because to keep a promise is a moral obligation." We recognize rather that people do feel obliged to fulfil promises because they have been taught by different means to do so. In the light of what I have said it is now clear that Broiles is wrong in his claim that Hume's account of promise-keeping "violates the standard interpretation of the 'is-ought' passage."

Let me now take up the main arguments which Kydd and Broiles present in support of their view that Hume maintains in FAP that no statement about "ought" can be derived from statements containing other moral terms. "Ought"-statements are different from other moral statements because the relation of obligation expressed in the form of "ought"-statements move us to action whereas the others do not move us. This is the position which they ascribe to Hume. But such a view is based on a mistaken picture of Hume's notion of moral judgments. It is a fundamental contention of Hume that properly speaking there are no such things as moral judgments. "Morality...is more properly felt than judg'd of." (T. 470). The so-called moral judgments are not like the "cool judgments of the

understanding." Just as in epistemology he tried to show an unbridgable gap between objects and sensations, between relations of ideas and matters of fact, so in ethics his purpose is to show the same kind of gap between demonstrative and empirical judgments on the one hand and value judgments on the other. His point is that the so-called value judgments are not judgments at all, no matter whether they are ostensibly about obligation or about rightness, or goodness or virtue. Hume does not make any important distinction between the notion of obligation and that of rightness as can be seen from his discussion of justice where he groups together "the moral obligation or the sentiment of right and wrong." (T. 498). It is true that in argument (6a') Hume has made the point that knowing virtue is not the same as conforming the will to it. But as I said earlier, this is directed against the rationalists who maintain that knowledge of virtue consists of a relation between an action and a situation and that the effect of such knowledge is the same for all. Hume is not agreeing with the rationalists' view that there is such a thing as the knowledge of virtue and that it consists in a relation. His argument is that if the first part of the rationalists' claim is true then the other part, that is, the necessary effect of knowing virtue, must be shown to be true too. It is difficult to see how on the basis of this criticism of the rationalists one can ascribe to Hume the position that judgments of obligation are different from judgments of right, virtue, etc. only the former being moral judgments proper. If what I have

said about the status of moral judgments in Hume's ethics is true then statements about obligations and other moral statements are basically the same, and it would seem very odd to claim that according to Hume judgments about obligation cannot be derived from any other moral judgments.

It is true that while discussing his impartial spectator theory Hume has allowed "reflection and judging" to play a role in our approval and disapproval of particular acts or characters. But this does not affect what I have said about the moral status of obligation and that of right or good or virtue, because even when he presents this view he does not discriminate between obligation and other moral concepts. Reflection and judging came to play a role both in our feeling that an act is right or good or virtuous and in our feeling that an act is obligatory. Moreover, judgments about obligation are made dependent on judgments about right, good, etc. The weakness of Kydd's view begins to appear towards the end of her book where she attributes to Hume the view that "we cannot know what acts are our obligations without first knowing what acts are good, and we cannot know what acts are good without contemplation and judgments."<sup>1</sup> We may recall here the distinction between the notion of virtue or vice (or any other moral notion) itself and particular acts' or characters' being virtuous or vicious. When Hume says that morality is more properly felt than judged of,

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<sup>1</sup>Kydd, op. cit., p. 180.

I think that he refers to the notion of virtue or vice itself which rests solely on feeling or sentiment. And when he allows judging and reflection to play a role in morals, I think that such judging and reflection, according to Hume, apply to finding out whether or not some particular act or character is virtuous or vicious.

One support for her view that by statements about obligation Hume means statements expressing a relation between an agent's will and his action, Kydd obtains from Hume's contention that "morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions."<sup>1</sup> Apparently she thinks of "morals" in this premiss as "moral obligation". But Hume nowhere says, neither does he imply that "morals" does not cover our notions of right, good, or virtue. And in this particular premiss the meaning of "morals", as we noted, is not clear. It could be taken to mean "moral sense" or "moral faculty", but the more plausible meaning seems to be "moral rules which move us to action."

Finally, both Kydd and Broiles are mistaken in taking FAP to be an addition to argument (6a') alone. Hume himself clearly states in the beginning of FAP, "I cannot forbear adding to these reasonings ...", and the reasonings immediately preceding are not only argument (6a') but all the arguments designed to show the weak-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 55.



ness of the rationalists' position. In particular it is the argument 6 as a whole. This is clearly seen when we take notice of the concluding sentence of FAP which both these writers omit while quoting FAP.

The correct interpretation of FAP. I shall now present what I think to be the correct interpretation of FAP. Any interpretation of FAP must take into consideration two things: first, that Hume is making a logical point here, and, secondly, that he presents FAP as an addition to the reasonings which were directed to prove that moral distinctions are not derived from reason. FAP has to be taken as supporting his contention against the rationalists. In particular, it substantiates argument 6 as a whole, i.e., the argument which precedes FAP, purporting to prove that moral distinctions are not a matter of demonstrative reasoning, nor of reasoning concerning matters of fact. This can be seen if we compare the major premiss of argument 6 with the last sentence of FAP. The major premiss of argument 6 runs as follows:

If the thought and understanding were alone capable of fixing the boundaries of right and wrong, the character of virtuous and vicious either must lie in some relations of objects, or must be a matter of fact, which is discovered by our reasoning. (T. 463, my underlining).

And the last sentence of FAP is this:

But as authors do not commonly use this precaution, I shall presume to recommend it to the readers; and am persuaded, that this small attention wou'd subvert

all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see, that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded merely on the relations of objects, nor is perceived by reason. (T. 469-470, my underlining).

In FAP Hume's point is that "ought"-propositions or propositions containing moral terms cannot be derived from "is"-propositions or propositions stating what is the case, and that this is something which is supported by both demonstrative and inductive reasonings. We cannot do it demonstratively because a deduction of "ought" from "is" would constitute an argument where the conclusion would bear something extra which is absent from its premisses. Any moral system which tries to show that morality is a matter of reason, through an attempt to deduce (in a strong sense, i.e., entail) moral distinctions from what is the case, is fallacious.

The argument, I suggest, also intends to show that the impossibility of deriving an "ought" from an "is" is supported by the nature of inductive reasoning as well, so that any attempt of that kind to show the rational character of morals will be against the second kind of reasoning. Hume's commentators have failed to see this because of the presence of a muddle here, the same muddle which I pointed out while considering argument (6b). There I said that Hume confused inductive reasonings or arguments concerning matters of fact with "matters of fact perceived by reason." Here, too, in the last sentence of FAP, he writes "perceived by reason"

instead of saying that the argument in FAP would prove that the distinction between vice and virtue is something which we do not arrive at by way of inductive reasoning. Those who would derive propositions containing moral terms from propositions stating that something is the case would go against the nature of inductive reasoning. It can easily be seen that the nature of induction supports the maxim that "ought" cannot be derived from "is". In induction by enumeration (the type of induction with which Hume was concerned) we infer about unknown cases from known cases, the unknown cases being similar to the known ones. But if we should like to infer "ought" from "is", we would infer something very dissimilar ("new relation") from the given. It would be a peculiar kind of inferring, such as "The next x will be white" from "x<sub>1</sub>, x<sub>2</sub>, x<sub>3</sub> ...x<sub>n</sub> are black." That is to say, inductive reasonings simply do not apply to such ethical inferences. It may be seen that my suggested interpretation of FAP fits argument 6, which immediately precedes FAP, neatly, and is very appropriate to the general tone of the section of the Treatise in which it appears.

Before I conclude this discussion it may be worthwhile to examine a recent sophisticated attempt to refute Hume's thesis that "ought" cannot be derived from "is", that there is a gap between facts and values, between description and evaluation. This would reassure us of the validity of Hume's thesis. In an article<sup>1</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup>J.R. Searle, "How to Derive 'ought' from 'is'", in Theories of

Searle offers a counter-example to the above thesis and also a theory which, he hopes, would generate an indefinite number of such counter-examples. He takes the case of promising, and the derivation of "ought" from "is" is shown in the following manner:<sup>1</sup>

- (1) Jones uttered the words 'I hereby promise to pay you, Smith, five dollars.'
- (2) Jones promised to pay Smith five dollars.
- (3) Jones placed himself under (undertook) an obligation to pay Smith five dollars.
- (4) Jones is under an obligation to pay Smith five dollars.
- (5) Jones ought to pay Smith five dollars.

To make his argument appear a bit neater, Searle supplies sub-premisses which consist of empirical assumption, tautologies, and descriptions of word-usage. Thus between (1) and (2) we find (1a) "Under certain conditions C anyone who utters the words (sentence) 'I hereby promise to pay you Smith five dollars' promises to pay Smith five dollars", and (1b) "Conditions C obtains". According to Searle, (1a) is a fact about English usage, and (1b) is an empirical assumption. Similarly, between (2) and (3) we find (2a) "All promises are acts of placing oneself under an obligation to do the thing promised." This, according to Searle, is a tautology. In the same manner, there are such subpremisses between the other steps leading to the conclusion. Since I shall

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Ethics, ed. P. Foot, pp. 101-114.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

confine my examination to his move from (1) to (2) and from (2) to (3), it is not necessary to mention the rest of the subpremisses. At this stage let us look at his theory. Searle thinks that the traditional empirical account of how words relate to the world, by creating a logical gulf between descriptive statements (such as, "Smith has brown hair") which are objective, which describe the world, are true or false, on the one hand, and evaluative statements (such as, "Smith is nasty") which express the speaker's attitude or emotion and are subjective, on the other, fails to account for commitment, obligation and responsibility. There are statements which fulfil the empirical criteria of descriptive statements and yet are different from the empirical paradigms of descriptive statements. For example, "Jones got married", "Smith made a promise", etc. These are all matters of objective fact but are not like "Smith is five feet tall" or "Jones has brown hair". Words such as "married" and "promise" are used to state facts whose existence presuppose certain institutions. Following Anscombe<sup>1</sup> he says that these are institutional facts as opposed to brute facts. Such institutions are systems of constitutive rules or conventions.<sup>2</sup> These institutions are not merely regulated but also constituted by the rules governing them. It is a constitutive rule of the insti-

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<sup>1</sup>G.E.M. Anscombe, "Brute Facts", Analysis, 1958.

<sup>2</sup>Here Searle uses Rawls's distinction between regulative and constitutive rules. J. Rawls, "Two Concepts of Rules", The Philosophical Review, 1955 .

tution of promising that to make a promise is to undertake an obligation. Searle says, "I started with a brute fact, that a man uttered certain words, and then invoked the institution in such a way as to generate institutional facts by which we arrived at the institutional fact that the man ought to pay another man five dollars."<sup>1</sup>

Before I examine Searle's argument, it is necessary to point out that his charge against the traditional empirical account is not quite accurate; at least, his picture of the empirical account does not fit Hume's treatment of promising. I tried to show that according to Hume, a promise is not merely the uttering "a form of words" which is an objective fact, but it also is a sort of ritualistic act involving commitment, which comes very close to what Searle wants to mean by saying that promising is an institutional fact. But by recognizing this Hume did not find it necessary to derive an "ought" from an "is". Here Hume was quite right. In fact, a recognition of the possibility of the ambiguous use of such words as "promise", "married", "murder", etc., does not commit one to deny the maxim that "'is' cannot entail 'ought'". In what follows I have taken a line of criticism of Searle which is very close to those of Flew<sup>2</sup> and Hare<sup>3</sup>. To my mind, they have very

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<sup>1</sup>Searle, op. cit., p. 112

<sup>2</sup>A. Flew, 'On Not Deriving "ought" from "is"', Analysis, 1964.

<sup>3</sup>R.M. Hare, "The Promising Game", Theories of Ethics, ed. P. Foot, also in Revue Internationale de Philosophie, 1964.

faithfully dealt with Searle's argument.

It is at step (3) that an evaluative element is clearly visible. So I shall concentrate my attention to the steps (1),(2) and (3). What is the status of the word "promised" in (2)? Is it used as a value-neutral word? If it is so used, then (3) cannot be derived from (2), because the tautological character of (2a), on which the derivation of (3) from (2) depends, rests on using "promise" as a value word. That is, unless the evaluative element in "promise" is taken into consideration (2a) is not a tautology. So also we must say, in (2) "promised" is already a value term. But (1) and (1a) express brute facts. In (1) "promise" is not used as a value-term; in fact, it is not used at all but is only mentioned. And, (1a) is a fact about English usage. If such are the status of (1) and (1a), then (2), as I have interpreted it, cannot follow from (1). What follows is something like "According to English usage, Jones' uttering those words mean what they call 'promising by Jones to pay Smith five dollars'." Let me call this (2\*). (2\*) would be a non-evaluative statement, like the detached report of an anthropologist or sociologist. Indeed, it would be very different from (2) which, as I have interpreted it, expresses Jones' committed participation in the institution of promising. And, (3) would not follow from (2\*).

It should be noticed that Searle's rebuttal of what he calls

the "Third Objection" does not apply to the above criticism. As he puts the third objection, it consists in saying that "the steps can be reconstructed as in oratio obliqua, that we can construe them as a series of external statements..." And, Searle's rebuttal is, "But what I am arguing is that taken quite literally, without any oratio obliqua additions or interpretations, the derivation is valid." Now, my criticism does not maintain merely that the steps can be reconstructed in such a way that the fact-value distinction remains unaffected, but that they must be reconstructed in this way. I have already tried to show that they need an interpretation without which the subpremises cannot properly be understood, and that given my interpretation Searle's ambiguous use of the same word in different steps comes to light.

We have seen that according to Hume, promising cannot be equated with uttering "a form of words". The more important thing is rather the participation in the institution of promising, making the necessary commitment involved in the ritualistic act of promising. Searle recognizes this when he maintains that promising stands for an "institutional fact". But it seems that he forgets this to suit his convenience. For, while rebutting what he calls the "First Argument" he says, "Uttering certain words in certain conditions just is promising...". For one, who is not an unreserved participant in the institution of promising, uttering certain words under certain empirical conditions is not promising, not at least



promising which implies the obligation undertaken by the promiser. Such a person would not regard the derivation of (3) from (2) as valid. He would perhaps give a detached report about them much like an anthropologist.

To see this clearly let us imagine a society whose members speak a language in which uttering the words "Āmi mahāpāpi" means "I commit a 'mahāpāp' or sin", and that to say this is itself to sin, and it is a constitutional rule of their religious institution that one who commits a "mahāpāp" has to clean it off by taking a bath in a particular river. An argument, like Searle's, can be framed now.

- (1) H (a member of our imagined society) uttered the words "Āmi mahāpāpi".
- (2) H committed a mahāpāp.
- (3) H is obliged to clean his 'mahāpāp' by bathing in the river G.
- (4) H ought to bath in the river G.

A logical minded member of that society may add subpremisses between the different steps. He may say that (2) follows from (1) because of (1a) which is "Under conditions C anyone who utters the words 'Āmi mahāpāpi' commits a mahāpāp", and (1b) "Conditions C obtains". He would say that (1a) is a fact about the usage of their language, and in (1b) the conditions referred to are empirical conditions. Similarly, between (2) and (3) he would posit (2a) "Anyone who commits a mahāpāp ought to clean himself by

bathing in the river G". This, he would claim, is a tautology.

To a member of the English-speaking society this argument will not appear as valid. What will strike him most is the claim about the tautological character of (2a). This will be so, because he is not a committed participant to the social and religious community of H.

Why then doesn't the same sort of difficulty underlying Searle's argument come out so easily? The answer is that unlike the institution of mahāpāp, the institution of promising is universally accepted (which is a contingent fact) and indispensable for the proper functioning of social life everywhere.

### Concluding Remarks

Before I proceed to the third part of my thesis, let me here state the main points which I have tried to establish in the second part. First, as Hume has presented his arguments against the rationalists, most of his arguments are obscure. The obscurity is mainly due to his faculty talk. But when his arguments are reformulated, and considered independently of his controversy with the rationalists, some of them become cogent. Thus Hume has not proved that moral rules and judgments are not the products of reason. But, if "reason" is to be taken as a faculty, then there is nothing to

prove or disprove here. However, my reformulation of the first argument shows that it can be established that moral rules and judgments are not the conclusions of "demonstrative reasonings" or of "reasonings concerning matters of fact". This is because the conclusions of such reasonings do not by themselves move an agent whereas moral rules and judgments do so. When Hume's sixth argument is reformulated in the manner I have done, it shows that the distinction between vice and virtue is not something which we can discover by reasonings about relations of ideas or by inductive reasonings. I have tried to show that the second part of the sixth argument, as Hume has presented it, has been muddled; here he himself has deviated from his original chain of reasoning; he has abruptly jumped into another direction in which he should not have proceeded. When the second part of the sixth argument is reformulated properly, i.e., keeping it close to Hume's original intention, then it is valid and free from certain criticisms which are usually directed against his muddled formulation.

Hume has not proved that the moral merit and demerit of an action has nothing to do with the faculty of reason. But, again, there is nothing to prove here; the very claim is confused because it is due to Hume's using the same sort of language as his rationalist opponents. However, I have tried to show that when Hume's second argument is reformulated, then it can be proved that the moral merit or demerit of an action has nothing to do with "reasonableness" or "unreasonableness" in Hume's sense of these terms. When Hume's

argument is viewed in this way, it again successfully underlines the distinction between the theoretical and the practical, between what is true or false and what is laudable or blameworthy. But we must not forget that all this depends on his arbitrary use of "reasonable" and "unreasonable". The third argument, which is directed against Wollaston, is not very important by itself, but it shows the distinction between the moral quality of an action, and the action's being intelligent or foolish.

In his zealous debate with the rationalists Hume has sometimes given the impression that he thinks that reasonings and beliefs have nothing to do with a moral decision. But, in fact, he has not denied that reasonings and beliefs have a place in matters of morals. He has admitted that when arriving at a moral decision the agent must be well-informed about the circumstances involved, that "much reasoning should precede" the agent's making such a decision. His point is that although reasonings and beliefs constitute a necessary condition for making a moral decision, the sufficient condition is not given unless a reference is also made to the element of feeling or desire or sentiment which is involved in such decisions. In the seventh argument Hume seems to be **trying** to prove that the distinction between vice and virtue is made by a sentiment, but he does not succeed in doing so. But in the same argument he claims that our ends cannot be justified by a means-end type of reason, and that one's choice to do virtuous deeds is ultimately due to his desire

or pro-attitude to those acts, are true.

Finally, the different interpretations of Hume's passage which contains the gap between "is" and "ought", have been inaccurate, and sometimes grossly mistaken. Amongst all the interpretations, only the standard interpretation comes close to Hume's intention. But the failure of these interpreters has been very largely due to a muddle which Hume himself has continued into the last sentence of the passage from the second part of the sixth argument. When this muddle is cleared up, the correct interpretation of the passage becomes this: That "ought" cannot be derived from "is" or that there is a distinction between facts and values, is supported by the nature of demonstrative reasonings; it is also supported by the nature of inductive reasonings. One cannot derive "ought" from "is" demonstratively, nor even can one derive it inductively.

PART THREE

REASONABLENESS OR JUSTIFICATION OF ACTIONS  
AND MORAL JUDGMENT

PART THREE: REASONABLENESS OR JUSTIFICATION OF  
ACTIONS AND MORAL JUDGMENTS

IX. PRELIMINARY

I have taken up the problem of the justification of actions and moral judgments in order to show that Hume's conclusion about the reasonable-ness of actions (taking "reasonable" even in a non-Humean sense, i.e., in the sense of "justified") can be supported by showing the limits of justification in ethics. Hume's critics identify "reasonableness of actions" with "ethical justification of actions". Hume would regard this sense of "reasonableness" as "unphilosophical", but he has not shown why it is unphilosophical. The standard use of "reasonable" for actions raises many sceptical questions. A few comments on some criticisms of Hume. Distinction between the different senses in which an action may be said to be "justified". Different senses of "reasonable actions". Different senses of "reasonable moral rules". The sceptic's questions in the light of these distinctions. A brief outline of my proposed argument against those who use the word "reasonable" in an evaluative sense directly for actions. Two arguments which I shall use against the non-Humean views: (1) argument against the violation of the fact-value distinction (AVFV), (2) argument concerning evaluative words (AEW).

X. THE "GOOD REASONS" APPROACH

Baier's position. His paradigm case of a fakir is absurd. An AEW can be presented against Baier's "good reasons". His attempt to prove a moral judgment is based on a fallacious AVFV, and is also subject to AEW. Paul Edwards' position. His ordinary language approach to the problem of justification of moral judgments. Ambiguity of the evidence-words. Edwards' notion of justification of the non-fundamental moral judgments by community-dependent good reasons. AEW against Edwards argument. Unless the fundamental moral judgments are shown to be justified, the justification of the non-fundamental ones remain weak. Following Edwards' programme of justification one cannot satisfactorily answer the questions of the sceptic. Toulmin's position. The actions and moral judgments which are justified by Toulmin's type of good reasons (which are tied to his

notion of the function of ethics), when properly analyzed, are found to serve to promote a particular sort of harmony of the agent's interests. Toulmin's community-dependent good reasons and his linguistic analysis of ethical terms. His account at best shows how ethical terms are used in ordinary language and how ordinarily actions and moral judgments are justified. AEW against Toulmin's argument. Toulmin's (and Nielson's) notion of "limiting questions": it is not sensible to question the principle of preventable suffering. This notion is tied up with his description of the function of ethics, a description which does not match the evidence he has offered for it; it is not a correct description. Certain odd results follow from Toulmin's notion of "good reasons". Kemp's justification of ultimate moral judgments and moral systems by relating them to his notion of the function of ethics. His notion of the function of ethics seems to incorporate a disguised moral judgment; hence his argument is question-begging. Some of the objections which were raised against Toulmin's account can also be raised against Kemp. Kemp's view that moral judgments are rooted in such facts as human desire, needs, etc. may be quite correct, but this does not help to solve the problem of justification. AEW against Kemp. Kemp himself comes to see the strength of the sceptic's point. The ordinary language philosophers' construction of a parallel between rational inductive beliefs and rational ethical beliefs is seriously misleading. Weakness of the ordinary language solution of the problem of induction. The same type of solution of the problem of the reasonableness of conduct is laden with even more difficulties. A possible objection to AEW and reply.

#### XI. THE QUALIFIED ATTITUDE METHOD AND THE IMPARTIAL SPECTATOR THEORY

Brandt's view that ethical beliefs and judgments are to be tested by the promptings of attitudes qualified by certain conditions, such as impartiality, enlightenment, normality of the mind, etc. His argument for the superiority of his method over other methods is not at all convincing to the sceptic, because the sceptic does not believe in any kind of method. Brandt's claim that in judging the force of conflicting principles we appeal to attitudes is in line with Hume's thinking, but an appeal to attitudes does nothing to justify ethical principles. Two persons may have opposite ethical beliefs although their beliefs may be tested by Brandt's qualified attitudes. Brandt's support of the condition of impartiality by relating it to his notion of the task of ethics (to adjudicate conflicts of interests) is weak. Without referring to some prior moral considerations, features like impartiality, disinterestedness, etc. cannot be regarded as the formal features of moral standards. Brandt fails to see that the meaning of "reasonable" is context-dependent. The question "Why should I be moral?" cannot be satisfactorily



answered. AEW against Brandt's general position. To avoid this difficulty Brandt would have to use a fallacious AVFV. The same may be said against his notion of "reasonable man". Brandt's Qualified Attitude Method or any other similar method cannot show that meta-ethical relativism is false. Frankena's argument against meta-ethical relativism is weak. Brandt's parallel between induction and the Qualified Attitude Method is misleading, because the methods are not on a par. Brandt's method makes use of some of the things which Hume has said about the meaning of moral terms and moral judgments. It is possible to discern at least six different views in Hume's writings, but the dominant view seems to be a modified subjectivism: "X is virtuous" means "When X is judged impartially and with full information about X, then X arouses a pleasant feeling of approbation." A distinction between the question whether certain evaluative judgments fit a given description of what moral judgments are and the question whether moral judgments are reasonable or justified. Hume would grant that certain evaluative judgments are moral judgments but he would not say that they are reasonable or justified. Hume has been right in refusing to apply his impartial spectator theory, in the way Brandt does, to the question of justifying moral judgments.

## XII. VINDICATION OF THE ULTIMATE MORAL PRINCIPLES

Pragmatic justification or vindication of ultimate moral principles by Feigl and Taylor: their positions outlined. The question of justifying the ends or purposes which vindicate the supreme moral principles of a system. Feigl's view is that the purposes (some social ideals) are "trivially validated" by reference to the norms and principles of the system concerned. This view involves petitio principii which Feigl himself seems to admit. Relativism of Feigl vis-a-vis certain other things he says. Question of origin and question of justification. "Non-arbitrariness" of the purposes is not the same as their "justification". Feigl has not considered the context-dependent nature of justification or reasonableness. The norms and principles of a system are not explicitly stated in a rigorous manner, nor can they be so stated: this blocks any serious programme of vindication ab initio. Feigl's attempt has the merit of showing the limits of justification, but he does not seem to realize that he has not solved the problem of justification. Taylor's attempt to avoid relativism gets him into difficulties. His notion of "a rational choice" of a way of life. His conditions of a rational choice are not value-neutral; hence a question of their justification arises. An examination of Taylor's condition of enlightenment. A choice may be enlightened and yet it

may be questioned whether it is a justified one. Taylor's taking those conditions as the defining characteristics of a rational choice puts him into new difficulties. He would never be able to attach value to "a rational choice" without making a fallacious AVFV. The supposed parallel between the vindication of an inductive policy and that of the supreme moral norms is seriously misleading. In the absence of a strict specification of the supreme norms and ideals of a given system the attempt to vindicate them cannot even be begun. There are many alternatives to the supposed ends or purposes in terms of which the supreme norms are to be vindicated, but alternatives for the goals of induction do not exist. There are serious problems about vindicating induction. Concluding remarks.

## IX

## PRELIMINARY

In this part of the enquiry I shall be concerned with the problem of justification of actions and moral judgments. I feel that it is necessary to indicate why I have taken up this problem. Also, I intend to make certain distinctions, and two arguments of a general nature to facilitate my discussion. Hence this preliminary.

The main reason for my taking up this problem of justification of actions and moral judgments is as follows. Hume has drawn his conclusion that actions and moral judgments are not reasonable or unreasonable from his premiss which expresses his arbitrary and restricted sense of "reasonable" and "unreasonable". He has not shown what, if anything, is wrong with the standard use of these epithets for actions and moral judgments. Here he has left a gap in his philosophy. I intend to fill up this gap as much as possible. I think that there is a confusion involved in the view that actions and moral judgments are reasonable or unreasonable. (This claim of mine has nothing to do with Hume's assimilation of "reasonable" and "unreasonable" to "true" and "false".) The presence of this confusion, when it is shown, will make us aware that Hume is not quite unjustified (although not for his own reasons) in concluding that actions and moral judgments are not reasonable or unreasonable, although it

might still be said that he arrived at this conclusion in a queer, but not illogical, manner. What I mean is that his conclusion itself (not the premiss which expresses his arbitrary use of these epithets) may be given some support by showing the oddity which lies in the standard use of these epithets for actions and moral judgments. Anyone who would wish to criticize Hume's conclusion would naturally attack his restricted and arbitrary use of "reasonable" and "unreasonable", i.e., the premiss from which he arrives at the conclusion. As I tried to show, there is nothing wrong with the logic of his argument. The objection against Hume would naturally be that he uses these epithets perversely or in a manner which is very different from our standard use of them. But if it can be shown that the standard use of these epithets is itself confused or muddled because it makes a claim which cannot possibly be met, then Hume's conclusion (itself) cannot be said to be odd, not at least on the ground that it is based on a non-standard or narrow sense of those epithets. My primary concern will be to show the presence of such a muddle involved in the claim that actions and moral judgments are reasonable or unreasonable, justified or unjustified. Let me now go into the details.

As I have tried to show, Hume has restricted the use of "reasonable" and "unreasonable" to those things which can be true or false, or which are, in some manner, connected with truth and falsehood. Now, the critics point out that Hume's conception of "reason" and "reason-

able" is unduly narrow. Baier maintains that "the main reason" for Hume's conclusions is that he had an "unduly narrow and confused conception of what it is to have and to find reasons."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Broiles, who follows Baier in these matters in toto, remarks, "Hume had an unduly narrow conception of reason when he restricted it solely to the means-end type of justification."<sup>2</sup> Kemp who does not seem to belong to Baier's school of thought, however, observes that Hume "uses the word 'reason' in a very narrow sense... He is not merely saying that reason, in his sense of the word, does not do certain things that others had said it did; he is also maintaining that his sense of the word 'reason' is the only strict and philosophical sense it can have."<sup>3</sup>

Baier, and following him Broiles, make a distinction between "exciting reasons" and "justifying reasons". (This is virtually the same distinction between "exciting reasons" and "justifying reasons" which was made by Hume's contemporary Hutcheson.) Explanatory reasons are what Baier and Broiles call "causal reasons"; such reasons explain actions. They do not justify actions. According to Baier and Broiles, Hume's means-end type of reasons are such reasons. Justifying reasons are different. They are concerned with the question whether an action is a justified one, and not with the question

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<sup>1</sup>Baier, op. cit., p. 261.

<sup>2</sup>Broiles, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>3</sup>Kemp, op. cit., p. 45.

why someone did something. Clearly, Baier and Broiles are denying that means-end type of reasons can play a justifying role. It seems that their notion of justification really concerns ends only. According to Broiles, "[The] means-end conception of reason is unjustified".<sup>1</sup> Such reasons, both Baier and Broiles think, are "provisional and incomplete." Baier writes:

"I went to the cellar to fetch the kerosene. I then poured some into a jug in order to be able to soak my hand in it. I then struck a match in order to set my hand alight." Here is a perfect chain of means-end reasons all linked to a mad end. We now know why he did what he did...But this is not a satisfactory explanation. We want to go on asking, but why on earth did he want to burn himself...even when we know one sort of explanation, one reason why he has that end (he has a guilt complex about the things he did with his hand), we still want to say, but that is no reason for setting one's hand on fire. It is an explanation why he did it, but no justification... We want to know, not what moved the man, but whether what he did was in accordance with or contrary to reason.<sup>2</sup>

These critics maintain that Hume failed to consider justifying reasons. They think that Hume neglected the question whether an action is justified or reasonable in the sense that it is justified by what they call "good reasons". "Hume was a slave to one type of reason - the causal reason", remarks Broiles.<sup>3</sup>

According to these critics, when we use the words "reasonable" and "unreasonable" for an action, we mean that the action is supported or justified by reasons. As Broiles puts it, "...when we apply

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<sup>1</sup>Broiles, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup>Baier, p. 265.

<sup>3</sup>Broiles, p. 68.

to actions these terms [i.e., "reasonable" and "unreasonable"] ...we are saying that the course of action taken either was, or was not, that course of action that can be supported by reasons"<sup>1</sup> The sense in which these philosophers understand "reasonableness of actions and ends" is often the same as "the ethical justification of actions and ends." The good reasons which are taken as justifying or supporting actions and ends are moral rules, e.g., the principle of equity, impartiality, etc. Some of these philosophers (e.g. W.M. Sibley) clearly state that 'reasonableness...requires "impartiality", "objectivity"; it expresses itself in the notion of equity.'<sup>2</sup> Sibley makes a distinction between the meaning of "rational" and that of "reasonable". According to him, "rational actions" means "those actions which are guided by the agent's intelligence in order to attain his ends, whatever his ends may be, and as long as they are such that the agent really prefers them." While acting rationally the agent selects the most effective means known to him to attain his end. "Knowing that a man is rational, we do not know what ends he will aim at in his conduct; we know only that whatever they are, he will use intelligence in pursuing them."<sup>3</sup> This meaning of "rational action", it may be seen, is almost the same as Hume's meaning of "reasonable action". Sibley

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>2</sup>W.M. Sibley, "The Rational versus the Reasonable", The Philosophical Review, 1953, pp. 537-8.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 560.

admits that the notion of reasonableness sometimes overlaps with that of rationality; sometimes an action which is rational is an action which is also reasonable. But "reasonable" has a distinct meaning which is something more than that of "rational". Reasonable actions cannot have as their ends something which is against the principles of equity and impartiality. In Sibley's words:

Knowing...that a man is disposed to act reasonably, where others are concerned, we may infer that he is willing to govern his conduct by a principle of equity, from which he and they can reason in common; and also that he will admit data concerning the consequences of his proposed actions upon their welfare as per se relevant to his decisions. This disposition is neither derived from, nor opposed to, the disposition to be rational. It is, however, incompatible with egoism; for it is essentially related to the disposition to act morally.<sup>1</sup>

Sibley has supporters. Rescher, for example, approves of Sibley's distinction between "rational" and "reasonable", and adds, "...whereas any discussion presupposed the rationality of the interlocutors, we must add in discussing ethics the tacit premise that they are reasonable."<sup>2</sup>

Thus these philosophers assimilate the question of reasonableness of actions to that of moral justification. I do not wish to deny that when we apply the words "reasonable" or "unreasonable" to conduct, we often mean that the conduct is morally justified or unjustified. It is also true that Hume has kept reasonableness

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>N. Rescher, "Reasonableness in Ethics", Philosophical Studies, 1954, p. 61.



distinct from "morally justified". He clearly says, "Actions may be laudable or blamable; but they cannot be reasonable or unreasonable: laudable or blamable, therefore, are not the same with reasonable or unreasonable" (T. 458). Such remarks of his follow from his definition of "reasonable" which is tied to the notions of truth and falsehood. It seems to me that Hume would not regard these philosophers' notion of reasonableness as a proper one; he would consider it as "unphilosophical". But Hume has not shown what is wrong with this notion of "reasonable actions", i.e., when this notion is taken as equivalent to "morally justified actions". He could at best say that this standard sense of "reasonable" is different from his sense of the word. But he has not shown that philosophically his sense is the better one, or that his sense of the word is free from certain difficulties which are to be found in the standard sense of the word. I shall examine some of the important contemporary theories which make use of this kind of non-Humean consideration of reasonableness of actions. I shall try to establish that when we regard actions as reasonable in the sense that they are morally justified, certain sceptical questions inevitably arise. And it is difficult to offer satisfactory answers to such questions. As a result, this notion of the reasonableness of actions remains obscure and philosophically confused; we do not cut any philosophical ice by directing the problem of the reasonableness of actions to such a non-Humean channel.

Before I proceed any further, I intend to make a few comments

on the critics' remarks on Hume's use of "reasonable and "unreasonable" and his means-end type of reasons.

First, Hume's meaning of "reasonable action" is non-evaluative. He does not use "reasonable" in the sense of "laudable"; on the contrary, he strongly rejects such a use of "reasonable". (T.458). As a result, his use of "reasonable" is free from certain difficulties (which I shall soon discuss) which arise from an evaluative use of "reasonable". This lends some support to the view that Hume's sense of "reasonable" is superior to the standard evaluative sense of the word.

Secondly, it is true that Hume has not considered the problem of the reasonableness of conduct in the sense of moral justification of conduct. But it is not true that he was unaware of what Baier and Broiles call "conduct determined by reason." While considering Hume's doctrine of the calm passions, I pointed out that Hume recognized that there is such a thing as determination of conduct by an impartial point of view. Hume says that to avoid "continual contradiction" which arises from our consideration of actions only from our relation with other people, we seek "some other standard of merit and demerit which may not admit of so great variation." Our desire for social converse or some ulterior desire leads us to take an impartial point of view. We sometimes act from and judge actions by such a "standard of merit and demerit" or an impartial stand-

point. Thus, Hume does recognize that our actions and judgments can be determined by what these critics call good reasons. But he would not apply the term "reasonable" even to actions which are determined by the so-called "good reasons". He says that such a determination of conduct and judgments is due to the operation of a calm desire (ulterior desire for social converse) "founded on some distant view or reflection"; to call this a "determination of pure reason" is "a natural abuse of terms." (See p.125 above.) So I think that it is not fair to say, like Broiles, that Hume was a slave to...causal reason.", if this means that Hume's philosophical insight was too feeble to perceive what the so-called "non-causal or good reasons" are. Instead of saying "actions determined by or supported by good reasons" Hume would say "actions determined by or done in accordance with certain rules and standards due to a calm determination of the passions founded on a distant view or reflection." He would call such actions "morally good" but not "reasonable". It is quite possible that Hume came to realize that there is some kind of philosophical confusion involved when "reasonable" is taken as a synonym for "morally good" although he did not care to point it out. That there is such a confusion or muddle, I hope, will be evident from my discussion. I shall try to show that once someone identifies reasonable actions with morally good or justified actions, he immediately lands into a fertile field where sceptical questions germinate with ease and rapidity.

Thirdly, the critics have not shown that Hume's means-end type of reasons do not have any justifying role, that they are only "causal reasons". It seems to me that a judgment or a belief about a means to an end has a dual role: it may be a part cause of an action, and it may also justify the action. My belief that exercise will give me health, in association with my desire for health, may cause me to take exercise. The same belief may act as a reason for my taking exercise when my end is to attain health. Consider the following: "Why do you exercise?" "Because it will make me healthy, and I want to be healthy." Here, "because" explains as well as justifies. Of course, such reasons do not necessarily offer moral justification. But, then, justification of actions is not always moral justification. One thing which such reasons cannot justify is an end. It is perhaps for this reason that the critics regard such reasons as an "incomplete and provisional sort" of reasons. However, I shall try to show that their "complete" sort of reasons have limitations (and hence are incomplete) and are not invulnerable to the attack of a thorough-going sceptic.

To facilitate my discussion of the justification of actions, I propose to distinguish between some of the senses in which an action may be said to be "justified". (1) First, giving of any reason for an action may be called "justifying" it. (This is a very uncommon sense of the term.) Here the reason produced by the agent need not be a satisfactory one; it may even be quite irrelevant to

the action. Thus, when asked to justify his killing of a snake, Jones may reply, "I killed the snake because the sun rises in the east." Jones may take this as the reason for his action, although we may regard it as irrelevant to his action, and may further ask him, "But what on earth has the sun's rising in the east to do with your killing of the snake?" Obviously, when Hume's critics talk about "reasonable actions" in the sense of "justified actions", they do not mean such a mad sort of justification as this. (2) Secondly, the reason which is offered to justify an action may be relevant to the action but may not be regarded as a satisfactory one. Jones could reply that he killed the snake because snakes are dangerous. His action would be "justified" in this second sense. But one might further ask him, "Are snakes dangerous when you don't annoy them, or when you keep yourself away from them? The reason you have given does not imply that you need have killed such a colourful creature". The first and the second senses of "justified" are not important for our discussion. (3) In a third sense of "justified", an action may be called "justified" on account of reasons which are regarded as satisfactory by the community of the agent or by a group of people. If I am a member of an orthodox Muslim society, I may justify my keeping four wives by producing the reason that the Quran permits this practice of polygamy. My conduct will obviously be approved as justified by the members of the community in which I live. But members of other communities which prohibit polygamy will not consider my practice as justified and my reason as a

satisfactory one. (4) Finally, we may ask for a "justification" of an action by reasons which are not only regarded by some community or communities as good reasons, but which are really good reasons and the justification really sound. (Notice the statement: "I don't want to know what "good reasons" and "justifications" are taken to mean in the Muslim society or in the Christian society or in any other particular society. I want to know what are really a good reason and a justification.) In this sense of "justified", an action is justified when the soundness of the reasons produced in support of the action is beyond doubt. Here it is necessary to make a further distinction. (4a) Such a justification may be asked for an action which is done by the agent as a means to his end. For example, when I wish to save my life, and when my house has caught fire, my trying to escape from the fire through the open doors in front, is "justified" in this sense. This is the sense in which Hume would call an action "justified" or "reasonable" (means-end type of justification). (4b) Such a justification may be asked for an action which is done or intended by the agent, and is not a means to some further end. Whatever reason may make the action "justified" in this sense, it will have to be a really good reason, not a community-dependent good reason and not a reason about whose acceptability someone may doubt. I think that the demand for the justification of actions in sense (4b) of "justified" is a quite legitimate one in the context of the claim that actions (as ends) can

be justified. This is the sense of "justified" in which people commonly claim that their actions are justified. The philosophers who identify "reasonable ends or actions" with "morally justified ends or actions" also tend to regard "justification" by good reasons in this sense. Otherwise, what good are their "good reasons"? It may be noted that whether or not there can be a "justification" in sense (4b), is not the sceptic's headache. Those who talk about "justification by good reasons" bear the burden of proof to the effect that there is such a thing as justification by good reasons in sense (4b).

Let me now make a distinction between the two senses of "reasonable action" in which reasonable actions are thought to be identical with morally justified actions. (a) An action may be called "reasonable" when it is justified in my sense (3) of "justified". In this sense, I call an action "relatively reasonable". A relatively reasonable action is one whose reasonableness is relative to or dependent upon some rule or code of conduct which is accepted by the community of the agent as reasonable or justified, but which may not be really justified. (b) In contrast to this sense of "reasonable", there is the sense in which an action is "absolutely reasonable" when its reasonableness is beyond doubt. Here, too, I find it necessary to make a further distinction between (bi) "absolute reasonableness" of an action done by the agent as a means to his end, and (bii) "absolute reasonableness" of an action done or in-

tended by the agent as an end. Here, again, for the sake of clarity, let us note that whether or not there may be "absolute reasonableness of actions" in sense (bii) is not a problem for the sceptic. To begin with, he does not link "reasonable action" with "morally justified action". The onus of proof lies on Hume's critics. They bear the responsibility of proving that there are such things as "absolutely reasonable" actions in sense (bii).

The philosophers who claim that actions are reasonable or unreasonable, quite frequently, refer to moral rules or judgments which, according to them, determine the reasonableness of the actions. When such a procedure is adopted, I think, a further question about the reasonableness of the moral rules and judgments themselves does arise. Therefore, the same distinction between relative reasonableness and absolute reasonableness may be considered in respect of moral rules and judgments. (a) A moral judgment or rule is relatively reasonable when its reasonableness or justificatory status depends on a higher-order moral rule or judgment. (b') A moral rule is absolutely reasonable when its reasonableness does not depend on any higher-order moral rule, and whose reasonableness is beyond question or doubt. Here again, I would like to observe that whether or not there are moral rules and judgments which are absolutely reasonable, is not a problem for the sceptic. Those who tie reasonableness of moral rules and judgments to justification of these things automatically undertake the responsibility of



proving that there is such a thing as absolute reasonableness of moral rules and judgments.

Now, I submit that a sceptic who denies that actions are reasonable or unreasonable may raise the following questions:

(1) Can actions be justified in sense (4b) of "justified"? (2) Can actions be absolutely reasonable in sense (bii) of "absolutely reasonable"? When it is said that the reasonableness of an action is determined by a moral rule or precept, the sceptic may ask:

(3) Is the moral rule or precept or judgment absolutely reasonable?

I submit also that his questions are genuine in the context of the philosophers' claim that actions (as ends) can be "reasonable" or "unreasonable" in the sense of justified or unjustified. If someone can give satisfactory positive replies to these questions, then the sceptic's case will be lost. He would, then, have to admit that at least in the standard sense of "reasonable" and "unreasonable" it is perfectly sensible to claim that actions can be directly reasonable or unreasonable, and not merely indirectly reasonable through the reasonableness (i.e., truth or falsehood) of their accompanying beliefs or judgments.

The line of my argument in this part of the enquiry would be as follows. Those who identify "reasonable conduct" with "good conduct", "justified conduct", "conduct justified by good reasons", etc., bear the burden of showing that in the field of assessment of conduct there is such a thing as absolute reasonableness or complete

justification. In such evaluative uses of "reasonable conduct" there is an implicit reference to absolute reasonableness or complete justification of conduct. Otherwise, what sort of reasonableness or justification or "good reasons" are claimed for an action or a conduct? In the absence of an absolute reasonableness or complete justification of action, its reasonableness or justification would remain very weak and questionable. I shall argue that an absolute reasonableness or a complete justification of conduct cannot be given. This will become evident from my examination of those theories which attempt to establish reasonableness or justification of conduct. I shall try to show that the proponents of these theories either themselves eventually admit the limitations of reasonableness (justification) or they would have to admit this. And the impossibility of showing absolute reasonableness or complete justification of conduct establishes that the evaluative (non-Humean) use of "reasonable conduct" is ultimately baseless. This, in its turn, shows that Hume is not wrong in his view that the epithets "reasonable" and "unreasonable" cannot properly be used directly for actions, although one may not like his reasons for this view.

The theories which I shall examine are as follows: (1) the "Good Reasons" approach (the theories of justification or reasonableness of actions and moral judgments as offered by Baier, Edwards and Toulmin), (2) the Qualified Attitude Method of Brandt, and, finally, (3) Vindication (the theories of justification of conduct

as given by Feigl and Taylor). I have chosen these theories as samples; I do not claim that these exhaust all possible attempts to establish reasonableness or justification of actions and moral judgments. But I believe that an examination of these theories will make us sufficiently aware of the limitations of any attempt to establish the reasonableness of actions by way of trying to establish justification of actions in a non-Humean manner. And at the same time this will show us the strength of the sceptic's claim. Here I must mention that not all of those philosophers whose theories I shall examine are explicit critics of Hume. Some of them directly attack Hume for his denial of the evaluative sense of "reasonable", while others simply express their views without referring to Hume. I have chosen both these groups in order to explore the various expressions of the claim about "reasonable actions" (in an evaluative sense) adequately, and to show the confusion which lies in this claim.

In examining these attempts I shall rely heavily on two arguments. It may therefore be well to mention them briefly before I proceed to the next chapter. I construct one of them following Hume's valid distinction between facts and values. In my discussion of Hume's dictum that "is"-statements cannot be derived from "ought"-statements, I tried to show the validity of his argument supporting the distinction between facts and values. (This is perhaps Hume's greatest contribution to the logic of ethics.) In view of this

distinction I now formulate the following argument. From the definition of any evaluative word, along with a descriptive premise, it is not logically possible to deduce a conclusion which is an evaluative statement. To do this is to violate Hume's distinction between facts and values. The words "reasonable", "rational" and "justified", like the word "good", in their primary employment are evaluative; (unless they are used non-evaluatively in the manner of Hume's assimilation of "reasonable" and "unreasonable" to "true" and "false" respectively). So, when someone states that a certain action is reasonable or rational or justified, he evaluates it. Such an evaluative statement cannot be deduced from a definition along with a descriptive statement, neither of which is an evaluative statement. To illustrate this point let me present the following:

- (1) Reasonable actions are actions done in accordance with the moral rule R.  
Action A has been done in accordance with the moral rule R.  
Therefore, action A is a reasonable action.
- (2) Justified (or reasonable or rational) moral rules are those which have the characteristic C.  
Moral rule R has the characteristic C.  
Therefore, moral rule R is a justified (or reasonable or rational) one.

We may also construct similar arguments about the typical moral words, such as, "right", "good", etc. Thus,

- (3) Action of a certain kind are right.  
Actions A, B and C are of this kind.  
Therefore, A, B and C are right actions.

If in (1), (2) and (3), the first premisses are taken as definitions, and the conclusions are evaluative statements, then there is a slide, in each of these arguments, from a non-evaluative use of "reasonable", or "justified" or "right" in the first premisses to an evaluative use of them in the conclusions of the arguments. Consequently, these become invalid arguments: The conclusions contain something which is absent from the premisses. Henceforward, I shall call any argument of the above kind by the name "an argument which violates the distinction between facts and values": briefly, AVFV.

The second argument which I wish to use against the proponents of the reasonableness of conduct is the one which I have taken from Urmson's excellent discussion of some questions about validity, a discussion which is greatly influenced by Hume's dictum. Urmson rightly says:

There is...a close logical connexion between an evaluative expression and the accepted standards for its appropriate use; but this cannot be identity of meaning, for no evaluation can be identical in meaning with description.<sup>1</sup>

...to call an argument valid is not merely to classify it logically, as when we say it is a syllogism or modus ponens; it is at least in part to evaluate or appraise it; it is to signify approval of it.<sup>2</sup>

What I wish to take from Urmson's point here is briefly this. Because the term "reasonable" (or "rational" or "justified") is evaluative, a question can be raised about a kind of activity or rule, which is

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<sup>1</sup>J.O. Urmson, "Some Questions Concerning Validity", Revue Internationale de Philosophie, 1953, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 223.

regarded by some people as reasonable (or rational or justified), whether it really is reasonable (or rational or justified). For the same reason, someone may legitimately raise the question whether what is regarded as a good reason really is a good reason. I propose to call this kind of argument "Argument concerning evaluative words": briefly, AEW.

## X

## THE "GOOD REASONS" APPROACH

The "good reasons" approach in morals is actually an objectivist account of practical and moral reasoning, but it is one which does not fall into any sort of intuitionism. The proponents of this approach maintain that our actions and moral judgments can be reasonable or unreasonable, rational or irrational, justified or unjustified, although "reasonableness", "rationality" and "justification" in this field are neither deductive nor inductive. They think that there are statements which may be offered as good reasons for our actions and moral judgments. Those good reasons justify these actions and judgments. The supporters of this view tend to be "ordinary language" philosophers. They supply standard examples or paradigm cases of what are regarded in ordinary moral discourse as "reasonable", "valid", "justified", "good reasons", etc. They maintain that it is such paradigm cases of "good reasons", "validity", "reasonableness", etc. in ordinary usage which show us how we are to understand what is or is not reasonable or justified in the field of morals. If someone denies that moral appraisals can be valid or invalid, he can be refuted by merely giving him a standard example of moral reasoning, for this is to draw his attention to just what sort of thing counts as "moral reasoning". To understand what moral justification is, all

we have to do is to consider such justification in actual moral contexts. Let me now examine three attempts made along these lines by Baier, Edwards and Toulmin. I shall briefly discuss, incidentally, another attempt to justify actions and moral judgments, made by Kemp, which, however, is not based on an ordinary language approach.

(a)

Baier's position

I have already considered, very briefly, some cases from Baier's book, The Moral Point of View, in order to examine his view that our ends can be justified by good reasons. I tried to show merely that such good reasons were not beyond the vision of David Hume. I did not raise the question whether the good reasons which are alleged to make an action (as end) reasonable are themselves reasonable or justified. This question will be implicitly there in my present discussion, in which I consider Baier's two articles.

Baier uses the argument from the paradigm cases or standard examples in a simple and direct fashion. In his article, "Good Reasons"<sup>1</sup>, he proposes to prove that "certain facts are good reasons for, and certain others good reasons against, doing certain things, quite irrespective of the purposes, wishes, plans, desires, and passions of the persons concerned."<sup>2</sup> This goes directly against Hume's

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<sup>1</sup>K. Baier, "Good Reasons", Philosophical Studies, 1953.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 1. My underlining.



theory of the reasonableness of actions, according to which an action is reasonable only in so far as it is an appropriate means to fulfilling the agent's desires, passions, etc. As Baier sees, the sceptic "wants a proof that something or other is a good reason." Baier proposes to offer such a proof, although, as he rightly says, such a proof cannot be deductive. A deductive proof is impossible here, because the premisses from which such a proof would proceed would be subject to the sceptic's attack. Indeed, it would be a confusion to ask for a deductive proof where it cannot possibly be given. However, as against Baier, I shall contend that the sceptic does not have to make this confusion in order to pose his problem.

Baier thinks that the proof which he proposes to offer would show that "anyone denying that a certain fact is a good reason (prima facie and presumptively) against doing a certain thing is laying himself open to criticism of a sort just as serious as that he is contradicting himself, namely, that he is irrational."<sup>1</sup> Baier presents the case of a fakir who is racing up and down barefoot on a bed of smouldering coal. He shows all signs of intense pain and says that he experiences it. And, above all, he cannot give any reason for doing what he is doing. He is not a masochist. This is the case of a man who, for no reason whatever, does what his organism revolts against. He says, "I just like this. I have no particular reason

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

for liking it," but adds, "and what's more, I find doing these things repugnant and painful." What would we say about such a man? If he were not insane, that is, if his behaviour in other fields were normal, then, according to Baier, we should call his conduct "irrational".

I am willing to grant Baier that irrationality does not necessarily consist in committing self-contradictions<sup>1</sup> (although at one point he makes a slip of the pen: "we can speak of irrationality only when someone in the face of a detailed proof of the incompatibility of two claims, maintains the two claims..."<sup>2</sup>). But it is important to note in what sense the fakir's conduct is irrational. In particular, I must ask, how different is Baier's account of irrationality as given in the case of the fakir from the Humean account? What Baier has tried to prove is that irrespective of purposes, wishes, desires, passions, etc. certain facts are good reasons for doing certain things, and certain others are good reasons against doing them. Has Baier proved this? Not at all. If I have to regard the fakir's conduct as irrational (though not insane), it is only because he is frustrating a general want or desire which is very common to human beings. Nobody wants or desires pain without any reason. The sole justification for regarding actions like the fakir's as irrational is that they frustrate common human wants, desires and passions. It does not seem to me that Baier has proved his point. If my argument against

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. My underlining.

Baier is said to be fallacious on the ground that the fakir himself enjoys the pain, then I would be inclined to consider his behaviour not as irrational or unreasonable but as insane.<sup>1</sup> Of course, in a sense insanity itself is unreasonable, but there is surely a difference between what we call unreasonable people and insane people. Unreasonable people do not necessarily need psychiatric treatment.

I cannot help feeling that Baier's case of the fakir is an impossible one, though not a logically impossible one. In our common observation of people we could never come across a case like this. A man who enjoys excruciating pain, for no reason at all, and is not a masochist, is a paradigm case which is not actually present in the world, but one which is concocted by a philosopher. It is true that the fakirs and darvishes in the orient sometimes undergo certain very painful rituals, and they do seem to enjoy a total experience of which the pains are a part, but not without any reason, their reason usually being a religious one.

In his supposed proof Baier wishes to show that one becomes irrational if one rejects the belief that the fact that an action causes pain is a good reason against doing it. He does not tell us why this is so. He says that by his action what the fakir denies "is clearly true."<sup>2</sup> I take this to mean that the proposition "An action causes

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<sup>1</sup>In fact, one critic of Baier, B. O'Shaughnessy, has thought that the case of the fakir is a paradigm case of insanity. (B. O'Shaughnessy, "Irrationality and Insanity", Philosophical Studies, 1955.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

pain is a good reason against doing it" is clearly true. But Baier has not shown at all that this is clearly true. Even if it is granted that the case of the fakir presents us with a paradigm example of what is regarded as good reasons for calling certain actions irrational, it has to be shown why such reasons are to be accepted as good reasons. When someone offers a paradigm case to teach us what an evaluative phrase like "good reasons" means, then it is perfectly legitimate to raise the further question why these reasons are good reasons. I think that the sceptic can easily present here an argument like AEW (see above pp. 242-243) and this will bring out the weakness of Baier's view.

In another paper, "Proving a Moral Judgement",<sup>1</sup> Baier tries to show that proving a moral judgment is a matter of getting the facts straight. He takes up the statement "Jones is a double-crossing opportunist" which he regards as a moral judgment. The statement is made by Jones' employer. Jones, a research chemist in a firm, is entrusted with the task of studying certain processes connected with the manufacture of soap. His firm has given him all the secret data on the subject. He makes an undertaking not to divulge the data and to stay with the firm for at least five years. But when Jones is offered a very high salary by a rival firm, he joins it and hands over the production secrets of his old firm. Given that these are all the facts of the case, Jones' first employer's moral judgment "Jones

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<sup>1</sup>K. Baier, "Proving a Moral Judgement", Philosophical Studies, 1953.

is a double-crossing opportunist" is, according to Baier, correct. He thinks that it is logically impossible that the judgment be incorrect.

Since the thing to be proved here is not a factual assertion but a moral judgment, it is necessary to see why the statement "Jones is a double-crossing opportunist" is a moral judgment. The moral aspect of this statement, Baier himself tells us, lies in the fact that "anyone making this remark in the circumstances outlined would be taken to imply that he morally disapproved of Jones conduct, that he thought what Jones had done was morally wrong, and that he regarded Jones' character as morally bad."<sup>1</sup> It is this, then which is to be proved. But has Baier proved this? Not at all. By supplying the factual supports, the good reasons, all he has been able to prove, if anything at all, is the factual part of the statement. The moral part of it has remained to be proved. For the sake of clarity, someone may wish to know how Baier would prove such typical moral judgments as "Double-crossing is bad", "Beatles are good people", etc. When asked to prove them, no amount of facts produced will do. I think that one can rightly point out to Baier that to characterize such moral judgments as reasonable or justified by presenting factual evidence is to make a fallacious argument like AVFV (see pp.241-242 above). Furthermore Baier's claim that certain facts are good reasons which support

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 35. My underlining.

or justify the moral judgment "Jones is a double-crossing opportunist", is subject to an argument like AEW. The sceptic will surely and rightly ask 'Are these "good reasons" really good?'

(b)

Paul Edwards' position

Edwards rightly rejects intuitionism and advocates a kind of objective naturalism which combines with it certain features of emotive theories. Moral judgments, according to him, are objective claims, and the features to which they refer are natural features. He maintains that there is a legitimate sense of "justify" and "good reason" in which many moral judgments are justified by non-moral judgments which constitute good reasons for the former. In this sense, according to Edwards, we can also say that moral arguments whose premisses do not include any moral judgments may be valid. The sense of "good reasons", "justify", "valid", etc. is derived from their use in ordinary language. It is this last point of Edwards' theory with which I am concerned here.

Edwards rightly observes that "evidence-words" such as the above-mentioned ones are ambiguous.<sup>1</sup> They mean one thing in the case of deductive reasoning, another in the case of inductive reasoning, and yet another in the case of supporting imperatives,

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<sup>1</sup>P. Edwards, The Logic of Moral Discourse, pp. 38-39, 131, 232.

requests and moral judgments. Thus, while analyzing the notion of "imply" he points out that in the case of deduction if one statement implies another, then the conjunction of the former with the denial of the latter is a self-contradiction. But in the case of inductive reasonings one statement may imply another statement although the conjunction of the first one with a denial of the second is not a self-contradiction. In yet another sense, "a man, in asserting p, implies q, if q would be considered by all or most members of the group to which the man belongs as a good reason for p. The group may of course be different in different situations, but most frequently it is the society or culture to which the man belongs."<sup>1</sup>

Edwards divides moral judgments into two types, non-fundamental and fundamental.<sup>2</sup> A non-fundamental moral judgment can be supported by reasons. It "does not stand on its own feet." But when one is unable or unwilling to support a moral judgment with a reason, it is a fundamental one. Such moral judgments do not have descriptive meaning. They have emotive meaning only. Most of our moral judgments, according to Edwards, are non-fundamental. Hence most of our moral judgments can be supported by reasons. These reasons, he maintains, are good reasons in a society when they are considered to be so by that society. In actual moral discourse fundamental moral judgments are very rare.

Edwards further says that there are certain natural features of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 182-183.

an act on which a moral judgment is passed. He thinks that a request for a justification is fulfilled when these features are pointed out. Thus, if it is asked, why the Nazi invasion of Poland was a bad thing, the justification, the good reasons, may be supplied in some such way: "It was bad because it was an instance of breaking promises, because it led to an enormous amount of human suffering." Similarly, Edwards says, the rational justification for saying "There ought to be no concentration camps" would be something like this: "Because they produce terrible suffering for the prisoners, because they brutalize the guards and those outsiders with whom they are in contact, and because they tend to produce an atmosphere of fear throughout the country."<sup>1</sup> Such reasons would be considered as good reasons in a western community of liberals. Thus, according to Edwards, once the facts of the case are given it is not difficult to justify a moral judgment, that is, a non-fundamental moral judgment.

Edwards is right when he maintains that in the sense of "deductive justification" no set of factual statements ever provides a justification for a request, an imperative or a moral judgment, and that when an ordinary person claims that a certain moral judgment is justified by a certain set of factual statements, he does not mean "deductively justified". These are all correct observations. It is also true that most of our moral judgments may be "justified" to an ordinary man by producing "good reasons" in the sense of "justified"

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 232.



and "good reasons" as Edwards uses those words. But the point is that such community-dependent good reasons for a moral judgment will not justify it to a sceptic. The sceptic will rightly point out that the same logic of Edwards which in the community of western liberals would justify "The Nazi invasion of Poland was bad" and "There ought to be no concentration camps" would, in Arab society in the dark ages, equally justify "Infant girls ought to be buried alive." The type of moral reasoning in all these cases is precisely the same.

The sceptic's demand for a justification for regarding the community-dependent good reasons as good reasons will eventually drive the ordinary language philosopher to "fundamental moral judgments"(which cannot be justified). And the sceptic will be perfectly right in producing an argument like AEW. Because of the evaluative aspect of "good reasons", "reasonable", "justified", etc. his criticism will be valid. Unfortunately, Edwards does not make any attempt to reply to such a very plausible objection.

Edwards himself comes to note that the "good reasons" may differ from society to society. And he recognizes that there has to be a common, ultimate object of approval between two people so that both may accept certain things as good reasons. He notes that if the Nazis approve of breaking promises, and of enormous suffering of mankind, then the good reasons given by a western liberal for calling the Nazi invasion of Poland "bad" would not be good reasons in the Nazi com-

munity.<sup>1</sup> However, it seems that Edwards does not think that a failure to justify a fundamental moral judgment thereby makes a non-fundamental moral judgment, which depends on it, unjustified. For he says, "a statement does not cease to be a good reason or a rational justification just because this process [of justification] cannot be continued ad infinitum."<sup>2</sup> But I think that this does not touch the sceptic's point. This is not that in order to justify a moral judgment the process of justification has to be continued infinitely. The sceptics are not the sort of people who want to enter into the infinite process of straightening the curly tail of a dog. What a sceptic wants is some kind of justification of the ultimate or basic moral judgments because the non-fundamental or ordinary moral judgments depend on them, and unless the fundamental ones are shown to be justified, the justifications of the non-fundamental ones remain very weak. That is to say, in the scale of reasonableness the non-fundamental moral judgments always remain what I have termed as "relatively reasonable". (See above p. 237) And a fundamental moral judgment, admittedly, cannot be justified. This means that in Edwards' philosophy there is no such thing as "absolute reasonableness" of any kind of moral judgment. (I myself fully agree with the view that there is no such thing as "absolute reasonableness" of moral judgments.) But this is merely an admission that the sceptic's case cannot be defeated.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

(c)

Toulmin's position

According to Toulmin, the criteria for calling a reason "a good reason" in ethics may be discovered by "giving a descriptive account of the function of ethical concepts."<sup>1</sup> These criteria will indicate what ethically good reasons are, and by knowing which reasons satisfy these criteria we will know what we ought to do. To discover these criteria, we have to elucidate the uses of the words "ethics", "duty", "ethical", etc. The function of ethics, according to him, is "to correlate our feelings and behaviour in such a way as to make the fulfilment of everybody's aims and desires as far as possible compatible."<sup>2</sup> It is in the light of this function that one should understand the "logical rules to be applied to ethical arguments."<sup>3</sup> In this way one finds that with regard to ethical questions and arguments good reasoning is distinguished from bad reasoning "by applying to individual judgments the test of principle, and to principles the test of general fecundity."<sup>4</sup> So, according to Toulmin, there are two types of ethically relevant considerations: (1) arguments showing that the actions enjoined fulfil a "duty" in the "moral code" of the community to which the disputants belong, whereas the actions rejected con-

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<sup>1</sup>S. Toulmin, The Place of Reason in Ethics, p. 193.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

travene this part of the "code"; (2) arguments showing that the actions enjoined will avoid causing to other members of the community some inconvenience, annoyance or suffering which would be caused by the actions rejected. (I have paraphrased this statement from Toulmin.)<sup>1</sup> Thus Toulmin finds place for both deontological and teleological forms of reasoning in ethics. In an unambiguous case, the moral evaluation of an action is to be made in accordance with the moral rule current in one's community. In the case of a conflict of duties, one has to act in accordance with that duty which will probably result in the least preventable suffering. And when the question of choosing between two moral principles or moral codes is raised, the choice is to be made in accordance with the principle of avoiding preventable suffering for other members of the community. According to Toulmin, the principle that preventable suffering ought to be avoided is bound up with the very concepts of "morality", "duty", etc. Toulmin supplies paradigm cases to illustrate his point. Let me quote his presentation of paradigm examples of good reasons in an unambiguous case and in the case of a conflict of duties:

...suppose that I say, 'I feel that I ought to take this book and give it back to Jones' (so reporting on my feelings). You may ask me, 'But ought you really to do so?' (turning the question into an ethical one), and it is up to me to produce my 'reasons', if I have any. To begin with, then, I may reply that I ought to take it back to him, 'because I promised

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

to let him have it back before midday' - so classifying my position as one of S1. 'But ought you really?', you may repeat. If you do, I can relate S1 to a more general S2, explaining, 'I ought to, because I promised to let him have it back'. And if you continue to ask, 'But why ought you really?', I can answer, in succession, 'Because I ought to do whatever I promise him to do'(S3), 'Because I ought to do whatever I promise anyone to do'(S4), and 'Because anyone ought to do whatever he promises anyone else that he will do' or 'Because it was a promise'(S5). Beyond this point, however, the question cannot arise: there is no more general 'reason' to be given beyond one which relates the action in question to an accepted social practice.<sup>1</sup>

But, if I have a critically ill relative in the house, who cannot be left, the issue is complicated. The situation is not sufficiently unambiguous for reasoning from the practice of promise-keeping to be conclusive: I may therefore argue, 'That's all very well in the ordinary way, but not when I've got my grandmother to look after: whoever heard of risking someone else's life just to return a borrowed book?' Unless evidence is produced that the risks involved in breaking my promise to Jones are even greater than those attending my grandmother, if she is left alone, I shall conclude that it is my duty to remain with her...Given two conflicting claims...one has to weigh up, as well as one can, the risks involved in ignoring either, and choose 'the lesser of the two evils'.<sup>2</sup>

It must be emphasized that according to Toulmin good reasons for doing an action or accepting a moral principle or a moral code are community-dependent. As he says:

If you ask me, 'Which of these two courses of action ought I to choose?', we can see which of the accepted social practices are relevant and, if no 'matter of principle' is involved, estimate (as best as we can) the effects which either course of action will have on the other members of the community.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

The reason "X fulfils a duty in the moral code of the community" is a good reason for "X ought to be done". The reason "X will avoid causing to other members of the community some preventable suffering which would be caused by any other alternative course of action" is a good reason for "X ought to be done". "Actions done in accordance with the moral principle P will avoid causing to other members of the community some preventable suffering" is a good reason for "P is a valid moral principle". Similarly, "Living by the moral code M avoids preventable suffering to the members of the community" is a good reason for "M is a valid moral code."

Toulmin's notion of "good reasons", as I have said, is tied up with his notion of the function of ethics. But it is not always clear whether this talk about the function of ethics (i.e., to harmonize our feelings and conduct in order to fulfil everyone's desires and aims as much as possible) is supposed to be a description or whether it is Toulmin's own recommendation of what the function of ethics should be. If it is intended to be the latter, then it is itself a moral judgment, and hence would need justification. But considering that Toulmin is doing meta-ethics by linguistic analysis, I take it that he is describing the meaning of the "function of ethics". But, as Mackie aptly points out in his critical notice of Toulmin's book,<sup>1</sup> Toulmin's view about the function of ethics does not follow from the evidence

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<sup>1</sup>J. Mackie, Critical Notice of Toulmin's book in the Australasian Journal of Philosophy, 1951, p. 121.

which he offers for it, and there is no single function of ethics.

Mackie says:

That this is the function of ethics does not, however, follow from the evidence he presents, the facts that all communities follow rules of behaviour which make living together possible by ensuring that their members show some respect for each other's interests, and that ethical judgments are connected with these rules. There is a wide gulf between showing some respect and trying to maximize satisfactions. Every adjustment is to some extent a biased one, and any ethical judgment will promote not harmony in itself but a particular sort of harmony, so that one function of ethical judgments will always be to advance some interests against others.<sup>1</sup>

If Mackie's characterization of (one) function of ethics is correct, then the supposedly justified actions and moral judgments (by good reasons) serve to promote a particular sort of harmony of the agents' interests. Toulmin, moreover, has given no evidence for his characterization of the function of ethics, as against, say, Mackie's.

The important question is, what can we achieve by linguistic analysis of ethical concepts? After we have analyzed our ordinary uses of moral terms and our ordinary methods of moral justification, all that we can expect to get is how in ordinary language those terms are used and how ordinarily actions and moral judgments are in fact justified. No wonder Toulmin's analysis achieves this much and nothing more. He tells us what is ordinarily considered to be a good reason in ethics. This seems to be merely a sociological report. Indeed, Toulmin's type of linguistic analysis can give us nothing more

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

than a description of the good reasons currently accepted in a given community. Here one who is enquiring from a genuine spirit of philosophical doubt will surely and rightly produce an argument like AEW. (See above pp. 242-243.) Indeed, the real question is whether what is thus considered as a good reason in moral discourse is really a good reason or not. The sceptic would ask, "What is the justification for a moral principle which constitutes a good reason for an action in a community?" And, "What is the justification for the principle of avoiding preventable suffering? In what capacity does this principle constitute a good reason for a moral rule?"

Now, Toulmin would perhaps present here his notion of "limiting questions". Limiting questions, as he says, are "expressed in a form borrowed from a similar mode of reasoning but not doing the job which they normally do within that mode of reasoning."<sup>1</sup> Like answers to a child's persistent "Why?", answers to limiting questions succeed only in regenerating the same question. Toulmin would say that when in the process of justification we have reached the principle of avoiding preventable suffering, we have reached the limits of justification in ethics. Such a principle is the basic normative criterion for the justification of moral appraisals. Toulmin would say that it does not make sense to ask for any further justification of this principle. If we are reasoning morally, this principle is the ultimate principle to which we must appeal. We cannot avoid the duty

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<sup>1</sup>Toulmin, op. cit., p. 206.



to prevent avoidable suffering "without completely abandoning the very ideas of 'duty' and of 'ethics' ".<sup>1</sup> In this spirit, Kai Nielson says:

...if we are reasoning morally [the principle of least suffering] just is the ultimate principle to which we must appeal...There cannot... be any further moral considerations, assuming morality continues to have the primary functions it does have, which would rebut [this principle].<sup>2</sup>

I think that this reply to the sceptic's question is ill-founded. Such a treatment, it should be noticed, is ultimately tied to the Toulminian analysis of the function of ethics. Toulmin and Nielson would say that it is because the function of ethics is to correlate our feelings and behaviour so as to fulfil everybody's aims and desires as much as possible that the principle of avoiding preventable suffering cannot be questioned. But, as I have tried to show, following Mackie, this description of the function of ethics is not correct, or, at least, it has not been established by the evidence which Toulmin has presented. On the contrary, if one function of ethics, as Mackie points out, is to serve some interests against others, then there seems to be nothing wrong (morally) in violating the principle of avoiding preventable suffering, if that would serve to achieve a particular kind of harmony to which some moral agents aspire. Secondly, it is quite possible to ask, ought the function of ethics to be what

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> K. Nielson, 'The "Good Reasons Approach" and "Ontological Justification" of Morality', Philosophical Quarterly, 1959, p. 124.

Toulmin and Nielson say it is? From the very fact that such a question can meaningfully be asked, one may begin to doubt the correctness of Toulmin's description of the function of ethics. Someone may question the principle of least suffering and his question may arise from moral considerations. For instance, someone may claim (morally) that ordinary people in a society ought to undergo some amount of preventable suffering, since this helps to develop potentially great men. He may genuinely consider his claim to be a moral one. It is not true, therefore, that one poses a limiting question when one asks for a justification of the principle of least suffering.

Earlier I pointed out that Toulmin's "good reasons" are community-dependent. (The same is the case with the "good reasons" of other ordinary language philosophers.) I would now like to draw attention to certain odd results which follow from this. A community, Toulmin says, is a group of people living together, and respecting one another's interests.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, there can be a Hindu community in Assam, a Muslim community in East Pakistan, a Nazi community in Germany, etc. Now, Toulmin tells us that the good reasons (justification) for a moral principle consist in the fact that by following them preventable suffering will be avoided. But whose suffering? Toulmin's patterns of ethically relevant arguments are all in terms of the community of the moral agent. The sufferings of people outside the community of the agent are not intrinsically relevant. If this is so, then the

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<sup>1</sup>Toulmin, *Ibid.*, p. 135.

eviction of the Muslims from Assam by the Assamese Hindus is perfectly justified (for such a Hindu) by good moral reasons, since the fate of the Muslims does not concern the community of the Assamese Hindus. By evicting the Muslims from Assam the Hindus are not violating the community-dependent principle of avoiding preventable suffering. The same may be said about the killing of the Hindus by the Muslims of East Pakistan, and also about the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis under Hitler.

There is a footnote in Toulmin's book (p. 165) in which he recalls a conversation with Russell in which the latter remarked as an objection to Toulmin's account that "it would not have convinced Hitler". Toulmin comments: "But whoever supposed that it would? We do not prescribe logic as a treatment of lunacy." Here Toulmin, it seems to me, has missed Russell's point. I think that the point is not what Toulmin elsewhere says more clearly: "To show that you ought to choose a certain action is one thing: to make you want to do what you ought to do is another, and not a philosopher's task."<sup>1</sup> (With this most philosophers would agree.) But Russell, in saying that Toulmin's account of good reasons would not have convinced Hitler, was not saying that Toulmin's account of good reasons would have made Hitler do what he ought to do. Following Toulmin's own account Hitler could have said that by the standards of his community he had good reasons for exterminating the Jews. All Hitler would have to be concerned

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

with is the happiness or the avoiding of preventable suffering of the Nazis. Given Toulmin's logic and the principles of the Nazi moral code, Hitler could morally justify all the atrocities he committed upon the people outside the Nazi community provided he truly judged that by these acts he would not bring any preventable suffering to his community. All that Toulmin's logic of good reasons requires is that one's actions satisfy the criterion of conforming to a duty in the moral code of one's community and that one's principles satisfy the criterion of avoiding preventable suffering or increasing happiness in one's community.

In connection with what I have said about Toulmin's characterization of the function of ethics, let me now briefly consider Kemp's attempt to justify fundamental or ultimate moral principles, a justification which he calls "some kind of rational justification or defence which falls short of proof".<sup>1</sup> Kemp's attempt, however, does not seem to be based on a linguistic analysis of moral terms. He rightly rejects, first, the view that one or more moral principles are self-evidently true, on the ground that such a Cartesian model of justification invites all the standard objections against intuitionism.<sup>2</sup> Besides, self-evidence, he rightly says, leaves no room .

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<sup>1</sup>J. Kemp, Reason, Action and Morality, p. 189.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

for doubt or disagreement, but disagreement about the moral principles is well-known; and the parties who disagree may well understand those principles. The other view which Kemp rightly rejects is that one or more moral principles must be taken as postulates. As he says, 'The value of [such a view] seems doubtful as soon as we ask "Why these postulates, rather than any others?"'<sup>1</sup>

Now, Kemp, much like Toulmin, claims that the function of morality and moral rules is to promote co-operation among people or what he calls "getting on" with other people: "this 'getting on' with other people is a function (and, I think, the main function) of moral rules and of morality in general...A moral rule or principle must...fulfil the...condition that it can be adopted as a means of initiating or preserving or extending some kind of co-operation or social activity between human beings."<sup>2</sup> Here, unlike Toulmin, Kemp is not thinking of the rules and principles of morality as community-dependent. But he admits the existence of rival moral systems. (And one has to admit this if one wishes not to neglect facts.) Now Kemp says that to tell whether the systems are reasonable or justified, one has to judge "how well or badly the rival systems fulfil the function that such systems must perform."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 190-191.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 192. My underlining.

I very much suspect that Kemp's characterization of the function of moral rules and principles incorporates a disguised moral judgment. Although, in a footnote, he adds that the "must" in his claim that one has to judge "how well or badly the rival systems fulfil the function that such systems must perform" is not a "moral must", yet, from the way he presents his view, it looks like his own view of what these rules ought to do or ought to be. If I am right here, then Kemp's attempt to justify moral systems by judging how well their rules and principles perform the function which they are supposed to perform, is question-begging. On the other hand, if his view of the function of ethical rules is to be taken as a descriptive account, then it needs to be supported by evidence, which is unfortunately missing from his account. Even if we take his account as a descriptive one, it is possible to raise the same type of question which I pointed out against Toulmin's account of the function of ethics and his attempted justification of actions and moral rules by reference to that function. The fact that Toulmin's characterization is community-dependent and Kemp's one is not, does not weaken the objection. One can (morally) question the desirability of "getting on" or of "co-operation" with others. Furthermore, if there is no such thing as the function of ethics and ethical rules, and if "one function of ethical judgments will always be to advance some interests against others" (Mackie), then the moral attempt to "get on" or "co-operate" with other people, from the

point of view of any moral system, will merely further some interests against others. Considering things along these lines, a difficulty inevitably arises when someone, following Kemp's prescription, tries to judge "how well or badly the rival systems fulfil the function that such systems must perform."

I do not wish to deny (I rather agree with Kemp) that "although it is doubtless impossible to deduce moral judgments from purely factual propositions about human nature, human desires and biological needs, moral principles and truths are nevertheless in a sense rooted in such facts".<sup>1</sup> I merely want to add, for the sake of clarity, that a moral judgment, because it is "rooted in" facts about human nature, is not thereby or therefore justified or reasonable. (A rapist may judge "Raping is a desirable kind of activity", and he as well as we may realize that his judgment is "rooted in" his psychological needs. The judgment does not, for that reason, become a justified one.)

At times though, Kemp comes to talk very much like Toulmin.

For example:

If a man has been taught a set of standards which are shared by his neighbours this is a good reason for him to resist any attempt to exchange these standards for a set that cannot be shown to be better, even though they may be as good. Agreement on standards is important; other things being equal,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

it is better for all members of a community to agree on standards than for there to be two conflicting, though in the abstract equally reasonable, sets. For agreement is one of the aspects of co-operation which it is the function of any set of standards to promote.<sup>1</sup>

An argument like AEW may be offered against Kemp's view of good reasons here, and also against the supposed reasonableness of the standards on which, he thinks, it is better for the members of a community to agree. Furthermore, I do not think that there is any necessary connection between intersubjective agreement (which is according to Kemp, an aspect of co-operation, the function which moral rules must perform) and objectivity or reasonableness or justifiability of a judgment. However, I think that the important point is that one has first to settle this: What sort of standard should constitute the basis of co-operation among a group of people? Co-operation or "getting on" with others is not in itself a virtue or a justified or reasonable activity. The co-operation amongst the Nazis themselves, or someone's co-operation with a bunch of criminals surely will not appear as justified or reasonable even to Kemp.

Kemp's admission of the strength of my sceptic's point is virtually made in such statements of his as follows:

...there may be some moral disagreements...which cannot be settled by any rational procedure, in the sense that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 199. My underlining.



there are no conclusive grounds, of any kind that can without linguistic distortion be described as rational, for preferring one of the two suggested courses of action to the other...This is a fundamental impossibility.<sup>1</sup>

...there is bound to be a theoretical limit to the cogency of the reasons.<sup>2</sup>

...if a man's way of life is to be governed by rational considerations, he has to recognize the need to make at least one decision or choice for which conclusive reasons cannot, in principle, be given.<sup>3</sup>

Whatever factors enter into a man's preference for one way of life over another, this preference cannot always be shown to be correct or incorrect by purely rational arguments...<sup>4</sup>

In these statements Kemp, instead of giving what he earlier characterized as "some kind of rational justification or defence" for one or more fundamental moral principles, is taking sides with my sceptic. I have therefore nothing more to say against Kemp. I would rather say that he has expressed in the above statements my points (or my sceptic's points) more eloquently than I myself could.

I would now like to say a few things about the parallel which the linguistic philosophers make between justified or reasonable actions and moral judgments on the one hand, and justified

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

inductive beliefs on the other. This will take me to Toulmin and Edwards again. I shall try to make my discussion very brief, considering that the problem of justification of induction is beyond the scope of this thesis.

From the point of view of his "good reasons" theory, Toulmin tries to show a parallel between the notion of reasonable or rational beliefs in science (based on inductive or probabilistic inferences) and reasonable beliefs in ethics. He says that to be "rational" in science is to employ "reliable, self-consistent methods of forming one's scientific beliefs." (This view of Toulmin is tied to the "ordinary language solution" of Hume's problem of induction.) Similarly, to be "reasonable" in ethics is to employ "reliable, self-consistent methods in reaching all our moral decisions", i.e., to act in accordance with the accepted social practices and the principle of avoiding preventable suffering.<sup>1</sup> Probability, according to him, is not just a matter of our confidence in a hypothesis, but "a matter of the degree of confidence with which it is rational to adopt a hypothesis."<sup>2</sup> In an analogous way, he says, the desirability of a moral principle is not "a matter of conviction with which all fully-informed people do hold to it. This likewise would be true - provided that we always related our moral judgments to experience, in a 'reason-

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<sup>1</sup>Toulmin, op. cit., p. 164.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 165.

able' way...But this clears up the problem. The truth is that, if different people are to agree in their ethical judgments, it is not enough for them all to be fully informed. They must all be reasonable."<sup>1</sup>

To show how futile it is to construct, from the point of view of the philosophy of ordinary language, a parallel between rational sorts of inductive or scientific beliefs and rational ethical beliefs, let me first briefly discuss the weakness of the "ordinary language solution"<sup>2</sup> of Hume's problem of induction. This will be a slight digression from my main discussion, but I think that it is a necessary one at this stage, and also, I believe, it will be worth considering for the sake of clarity. The ordinary language solution of the problem of induction, it seems to me, has three main claims. First, it is claimed that the demand for a deductive sort of justification of induction is illegitimate. Paul Edwards illustrates this by taking the word "physician". He argues that if one means by this word "a person who can cure any disease in less than two minutes", one would be using the word in a sense far from its ordinary and standard meaning. In the same way, one who asks for "reasonableness" or "validity" of the deductive type in an inductive argument,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Here I take this view as a composite; the authors whose views come close to it are Toulmin, Edwards, Ayer and Strawson.

would ask for something which is far from the ordinary and standard meaning of these words as they are used in the field of induction.<sup>1</sup> The second claim of the ordinary language solution of the problem of induction is that the question of a general justification of induction simply does not arise. In this the proponents of this theory follow Hume's view of the ultimacy and unavoidability of the inductive procedure. For example, Strawson says:

Suppose I am convinced that there is nothing to choose, as far as reason goes, between the 'basic canons' of induction, and a consistent counter-inductive policy. Is an 'arbitrary choice' then really open to me?(Just try to make it.)<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, they hold that induction is nevertheless a reasonable procedure, since proceeding according to the canons of induction is what it means to be reasonable. Strawson says that, "...being reasonable" means "to proportion the degree of conviction to the strength of the evidence."<sup>3</sup> And Toulmin writes, "The question, what makes a reason a 'good' reason in science, and what makes an argument or explanation a 'valid' one, can only be answered in terms of the reasons, arguments and explanations we do accept..."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>P. Edwards, "Bertrand Russell's Doubt About Induction", in Logic and Language, ed. A. Flew. See also Strawson's Introduction to Logical Theory, p. 250.

<sup>2</sup>Strawson, "On Justifying Induction", Philosophical Studies, 1958, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Strawson, Introduction to Logical Theory, p. 257.

<sup>4</sup>Toulmin, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

This attempt to solve Hume's problem of induction, of course, clarifies the muddle which underlies Hume's demand. Hume asked for a demonstrative validation of induction. The argument of these philosophers makes it clear that such a demand is illegitimate, because induction is not deduction. To cast doubt upon induction on the ground that it does not conform to the standard of deductive validity is to misunderstand the nature of induction. It may be thought that the ordinary language philosophers' argument simply proves a platitude that induction is not deduction. But it should be noted that although it may now appear to be a commonplace assertion that induction is not deduction, yet it was necessary to express it, in the way that these philosophers have done, in order to dispel confusions that shroud Hume's manner of posing the problem.

But let me now point out why the ordinary language solution of the problem of induction fails. It fails first of all because an argument like AEW can be produced against this attempt. The question whether the "good reasons", "justified", "valid" etc., as they are applied to induction by these philosophers, are really good reasons, justified, etc. does arise, and cannot be refuted by an appeal to ordinary language, and the actual practice of the scientists. A challenge like Strawson's to act upon a counter-inductive policy does not really touch the logical issue involved. It merely shows the practical triviality of the problem.

Men have often relied on diverse methods of prognostication. Not all men, always, follow the inductive policy for the purpose of prediction. If we are being unreasonable to accept the other candidates, it has to be shown why we are unreasonable. And even if it were practically impossible to act upon a non-inductive policy, let alone a counter-inductive policy, this does not logically establish the superiority of the inductive policy over the non-inductive ones.

To rest the matter of justification on linguistic usage or the actual practice of working scientists seems to be a shuffling evasion of the logical issue of justifying induction. Everyone in our culture may accept a certain policy, be it political, scientific, religious or moral, as reasonable or rational, but it is not this general or universal acceptance which makes it so. In our language the word "rational" may have been permeated, as the linguistic philosophers claim, by the commitment to the practice of induction. But this merely shows that the rationality of the inductive policy has been accepted as a kind of social conformity regarding language. Surely social conformity has nothing to do with the logical issue of reasonableness or rationality or justification.

After someone comes to realize the strength of the above criticism of the ordinary language philosophers' solution of the

problem of induction, it will be easy for him to accept that Toulmin's or Edwards' ordinary language solution of the problem of reasonableness of conduct is equally fallacious. What Toulmin says does not "clear up the problem" at all. He has not cleared up the problem of what it means to be "reasonable" in ethics. All we learn from him is that to be "reasonable" in ethics is to follow the community-dependent "good reasons", just as to be "reasonable" in science is to accept the actual practice of working scientists. But, as I have said, the status of such "good reasons" is not very different from that of a sociological report. The philosophical question is, why are they "good reasons"? What good ground is there to accept the community-dependent good reasons as really good reasons? The reasonable man of these linguistic philosophers seems to be a man who is a conformist to the accepted moral code of his community. An obedient member of the Gestapo would be a reasonable man in the Nazi community. But surely, these philosophers, being members of the western liberal community, would not regard such a man as reasonable.

Let me point out very briefly why an analogy between the justification of deductive and inductive reasonings on the one hand, and that of ethical reasonings on the other, cannot be legitimately drawn. Suppose someone maintains the following: (1) Reasonable or justified deductive arguments are those

which are actually conducted in accordance with the rules of deduction, (rules of inference). The definition of "deductive reasoning" would show which arguments are deductively valid and which are not. (2) Reasonable or justified inductive arguments are those which are actually conducted in accordance with the canons of induction. These canons would show which particular arguments are or are not inductively reasonable. (3) Reasonable or justified ethical arguments are those which are actually conducted in accordance with the existing ethical principles, rules, precepts, etc.

Now, the proper reply to such an approach will be the following. (1) There is virtually no disagreement about the correct rules of deduction. We know what those rules are. So it is easy to decide which arguments are deductively valid or justified or reasonable. (The disagreement about rules of deduction, if there be any, is of no practical importance, and can be settled.) (2) We know very well what the canons of induction are. (The question whether these canons are justified, again, is not a matter of practical importance. And disagreement about the acceptability of these canons of induction is negligible.) So we can easily determine which arguments are inductively justified or reasonable. But (3) there is no one definition of what it means to be ethical or moral, what the "function of ethics or moral rules or morality" is, and what the moral rules are. There are many



rival systems of morals. So how can we decide which ethical reasoning is ethically reasonable? The point is that it is by no means clear what we are to understand by "ethical reasonableness".

The merit of the "good reasons" approach, both in the field of induction and in that of ethics, is that it shows us clearly that it is a muddle to ask for a kind of justification for a certain thing which cannot possibly be given because of the very nature of that thing. The proponents of this approach are right when they say that the standards of deductive and inductive justification are simply irrelevant to ethical reasoning. But it must be noted that the sceptic's demand for a proof that something or other is a good reason in the fields of action and morality is not necessarily a demand for a deductive or inductive proof. He may produce an argument like AEW (see above pp. 242-243) which has nothing to do with a demand for a deductive or inductive justification or reasonableness of the so-called good reasons. A critic of AEW might say that an argument like AEW against the "good reasons" approach indicates merely that we can always challenge any grading criterion. He might argue that unless we can tell what counts as a reason for or against something, a demand for reasons in such a case is senseless.<sup>1</sup> And if such a demand is continued, we could in principle never find an ultimate justification of moral judgments. In reply to this criticism of an argument like

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<sup>1</sup>For such a criticism of AEW, see Kai Nielson's "The Good Reasons Approach" and "Ontological Justification" of Morality", p. 128.

AEW, I would like to say that the sceptic does not have to be able to tell what it would be like to give reasons for a grading criterion. The onus, clearly, lies on his opponent. If it is shown that an ultimate justification of moral judgments cannot be given, then this will only go to establish the sceptic's point. Indeed, when I read some philosophers saying that "in ethics... the range of decisions for which it makes sense to talk of a 'moral justification' is limited...there is a point up to which morality can take you, but beyond which it cannot go"<sup>1</sup> I tend to suspect that instead of refuting my sceptic, they in fact merely support him.

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<sup>1</sup>Toulmin, op. cit., p. 156.

## XI

THE QUALIFIED ATTITUDE METHOD AND  
THE IMPARTIAL SPECTATOR THEORY

The theory of justification or reasonableness of actions and moral beliefs which I shall now examine is of special interest for this enquiry in that most of its attractive features were foreshadowed by Hume himself in connection with his analysis of the meaning of moral judgments and moral terms. I shall therefore have to say a few things about Hume's views on these matters. The theory which I am now concerned with is called "the Qualified Attitude Method", and its proponent is Richard Brandt.<sup>1</sup>

Brandt thinks that there is a parallel between the problem of justifying scientific beliefs and that of justifying ethical beliefs. Neither scientific beliefs nor ethical beliefs are entailed by observational evidence. But, he points out, there is "a rule of induction" which prescribes that scientific beliefs be accepted in the presence of a certain type of evidence. He maintains that ethical beliefs, too, may be justified by a directive similar to the rule of induction. And just as the rule of induction may be supported by some reasons (Brandt mentions reasons of the vindication type which Feigl's theory of vindication of induction

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<sup>1</sup>R. Brandt, Ethical Theory, Chapter Ten, pp. 241-269.

upholds<sup>1</sup>), so also this directive in ethics may be supported by reasons. Let me now point out how Brandt presents such a rule in ethics and supports it.

He points out that we test tentative ethical conclusions by appealing to moral principles. But, he says, there are situations of conflict between principles themselves. And these principles are often imprecise; they are not written down with all the qualifications needed. Also, sometimes we find it necessary to correct or abandon a given principle. When, under such circumstances, a supplement to principles is required, we can accept "the promptings of the attitudes we find persisting in ourselves, with certain important restrictions and reservations...we can do this, and it seems that sometimes we do." These restrictions and reservations are as follows: (1) The attitude must be impartial. It "would not be changed if positions of individuals were reversed, or if the individuals involved were different from whom they are." (2) It must be adequately informed. "An attitude is informed...if it would stand up in the face of a vivid awareness of relevant facts, if the person were impartial." (3) The attitude must be taken in a normal state of mind. A person is normal when he is not ill, insane, fatigued, angry, grieved, depressed, etc. (4) The attitude must be such that accepting its prompting should not be in-

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<sup>1</sup>H. Feigl, "De Principiis Non Disputandum...?" in Philosophical Analysis, ed. Max Black.

compatible with having a system of consistent general principles which is not excessively complex. By accepting the prompting of such an attitude, Brandt maintains, we can test ethical judgments. This is "the Qualified Attitude Method". He now puts forward a general principle about when an ethical statement is to be asserted, comparable to a rule of induction. The principle is this: "Assert an ethical proposition if and only if it satisfies the conditions of the Qualified Attitude Method." <sup>1</sup> (Henceforward when I mention Brandt's Method, I shall abbreviate it as QAM.)

Brandt claims "not only that the Method (and the corresponding rule) represents our practice in moral reflection (just as inductive methods and the rule of induction represent the practice of working scientists), but also that there are good reasons for using the method, for accepting and following the rule."<sup>2</sup>

One such good reason, he claims, is that the QAM is a better alternative than other methods by which people have tried to justify ethical beliefs. He considers three such methods, and tries to establish the superiority of the QAM in the following manner. First, it is better than the theological method according to which we justify ethical judgments by referring them to the will of God. The QAM is better because it gives a definite account of how exactly we do or should go about

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 251-252.

answering ethical questions, whereas the theological method does not. Secondly, the QAM is better than the method which tries to solve ethical problems by appealing to what is "natural", because the latter method does not tell us what kinds of events in nature are good or desirable. Finally, the QAM is superior to the utilitarian method. Brandt considers in particular rule-utilitarianism which he takes to be the most influential kind of utilitarianism. He claims that the rule-utilitarian method has to use the QAM in order to decide what social system will yield maximum welfare. In Brandt's opinion, ultimately there is no plausible alternative to the appeal to preferences and the preferences must be such that they fulfil the conditions of the QAM. Again, the rule-utilitarian method is defective because we must consider whether we should take account of other things besides the welfare of the sentient beings in determining rightness of conduct. Also, it rules out what Brandt calls the consideration of "equality of welfare". The QAM is free from these defects.

Before I proceed to consider Brandt's other positive defences of the QAM let me make one comment on Brandt's supports for the Method, which I have just described. Even if Brandt's claim that the QAM is superior to the three methods is true, this does not prove that it is superior to all such methods so far presented and which one could conceive of. However, I do not wish to construe this as a sceptical counter-argument. The argument is directed towards some-

one who believes that some method or other can justify ethical judgments. For one who denies the possibility of ultimate justification of ethical judgments by any kind of method, the above kind of support for the QAM will not be attractive at all. This is for the following reason. If I believe, for instance, in the rule-utilitarian method, and then it is shown to me that the QAM is superior to my method, then perhaps I shall accept the QAM. But if I do not believe in any method, then there will be no method for me to which the QAM might be superior. So even if the QAM is superior to all other methods, this will not convince a sceptic who denies the possibility of ultimate justification of moral judgments by any kind of method.

Now, Brandt offers some positive supports which he considers as some "really convincing reasons" for the QAM. First, he tries to support the view that in judging the force of conflicting principles we must appeal to our attitudes. He says that it is difficult to think of an alternative. Now, I am quite willing to admit that ultimately we do appeal to attitudes or desires or "passions" when we try to justify actions and moral judgments. It is quite in line with Hume's view to say that factual and logical considerations are not enough; that moral judgments ultimately rest on feelings (or attitudes). But it is not at all clear to me how an appeal to a certain kind of attitude will justify a moral judgment. I shall very soon indicate how it is possible for two persons to have two

opposite moral beliefs when they appeal to their attitudes, even when their attitudes are of the special kind which Brandt recommends.

According to Brandt, the most important condition by which our attitudes must be qualified is impartiality. He argues for this in the following way. First, if a moral principle is not judged by an impartial attitude, then no one could be logically forced to embrace an ethical principle which he did not like. And in that case "a reasonable adjudication of conflicts of interests" would not be possible. He says:

A general principle, supported by or guided by impartial attitudes, is fitted in just this way, and can command the respect of reasonable men. If ethical principles are general and impartial principles in this sense, then and only then are they fitted to the social task ethical principles are ordinarily expected to perform.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, by following the dictates of an impartial attitude we would have a better chance of general benefit.

The above reasons which Brandt offers for the condition of impartiality must be carefully examined. He seems to have assumed that the task of ethical principles is to adjudicate conflicts of interests. It is debatable whether this assumption is true. As I have already indicated, following Mackie, there is no such thing as the function or task of ethics and ethical principles. It is

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 263. My underlining.



quite possible for a man to claim (morally) that conflicts of interests in a society are necessary for the development of a certain kind of person, and that this is what is desirable. We cannot say that such a man does not know what we "hope for" in ethics. It is merely that his notion of the task of ethical principles is different. (We may recall here Nietzsche, who rejected the principle of compassion. Nietzsche did not really go beyond morality, but by rejecting that sort of principle he was merely, as he himself thought, "transvaluing" the principle of (what he considered to be) "slave-morality.") Hence a support of impartiality by relating it to the task of ethical principles will not do. As I have also indicated in the last chapter, any characterization of the task of ethics seems to incorporate a disguised moral judgment. (Brandt's view of the task of ethical principles, i.e., "to adjudicate conflicts of interests" seems to me to be a moral judgment itself.) And, hence, to support a certain kind of attitude by referring it to a supposed task of ethics is to beg the question. One can always question the desirability of any supposed task of ethical principles.

I would like to make here a few remarks on any attempt which tries to establish such things as the objectivity or justification or reasonableness of moral judgments by appealing to such considerations as impartiality, disinterestedness, etc., which, it is often claimed, any moral agent should observe. Some philosophers

take such features as constituting a formal standard of right and wrong. The question which I want to raise is, what are we to understand by moral impartiality, moral disinterestedness, etc.? Is it that impartiality, disinterestedness, etc., by themselves, determine the nature of a moral judgment? It seems to me that there are plenty of cases where partiality for example, would not be considered as undesirable (morally). Let me take a familiar case to illustrate this. Suppose a mother prefers to look after the interests of her own children more than to look after the interests of other people's children. In this she surely displays partiality to her own children. But do we call her "immoral" for this reason? Considerations like this show that without referring to some prior moral considerations, features like impartiality, disinterestedness, etc. cannot be regarded as formal features of moral standards. But when impartiality, disinterestedness, etc., in this way, do constitute features of moral standards, they are found to be some moral principles themselves. No wonder, some philosophers, e.g., Monro, would rightly claim that "The principle of impartiality...is not morally neutral, but is itself a moral principle. Hence it is exposed to all the traditional questions about the nature and justification of moral principles..."<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, the principles of impartiality, disinterestedness, fairness, etc. themselves need to be justified or shown to be reasonable.

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<sup>1</sup>Monro, op. cit., p. 205.

Brandt seems to have taken "a reasonable man" to be a man who respects impartial attitudes and the general principles which are based on them. That is, "a reasonable man", according to him, is a moral man in his sense of "moral". Given Brandt's sense of "moral", a man who does not wish to be impartial is "unreasonable" only in the moral sense of "unreasonable". But it must be noted that terms like "reasonable" and "rational" are context-dependent. If for reasons of self-interest a person does not ~~want~~ to take an impartial attitude, then we cannot call him "unreasonable" in another sense (prudential sense) of the term. To show that he is unreasonable in the second sense, it has to be shown that there are good non-moral reasons (i.e., reasons of self-interest or prudential reasons) for him to be impartial. I think that this cannot be shown. Let me discuss this briefly.

Suppose that someone denies that there is any good reason for his being impartial. What can Brandt say about him? He might point out that such a person is unreasonable because he does not wish to serve the ethical purpose of adjudicating conflicting interests. But we must note here that this is his failure to be ethically reasonable, only if ethical reasonableness implies impartiality. (Incidentally, as I have tried to show, it has not been established by Brandt that ethical reasonableness does imply impartiality, disinterestedness, etc.). But the person in question may not be within the bounds of morality. He can reasonably ask,

"Why must I be moral?" To such a person it will now perhaps be said that if people usually do not act impartially then the result will be something like what Hobbes called "the state of nature". This may be granted, but this does not really fulfil his demand for reasons for his being impartial. He may say that if all people act impartially, there may be what his opponents consider as a desirable social life, but that does not give any guarantee that his own ends will thereby be fulfilled. Here it will not do to reply in the manner of Brian Medlin that moral philosophers are not rat-catchers, that good fellows should not bother to justify morality (or impartiality) to such a person.<sup>1</sup> Such a reply is not only irrelevant, but also an indirect admission of the moral philosopher's failure.

Furthermore, the person who questions the desirability of impartiality is not raising a senseless question. It is not senseless to ask for non-moral (prudential) reasons for being impartial. He might apply Hume's "veridical paradox"<sup>2</sup>: "'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger." Perhaps it will now be said to such a person that by always acting partially he will get into difficulties (as Hume puts it, "so many contradictions to our sentiments in society and conversation" (T. 583)). But even this will not do,

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<sup>1</sup>B. Medlin, "Ultimate Principles and Ethical Egoism", Australasian Journal of Philosophy, 1957, pp. 113-114.

<sup>2</sup>I have taken this useful phrase which properly describes paradoxes of this kind, from Quine's The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays, p. 5.

because it is quite possible for a sufficiently intelligent person to avoid the difficulties which result from his being partial. Finally, one may point out that human nature is such that people have a pro-attitude towards impartiality. This may be quite true. As Hume observes on p. 583 of his Treatise, there may be causes for peoples' taking such an attitude towards impartiality, but the point is that this is not a justification for impartiality, and Hume did not think that it was.

Much the same thing may be said against Brandt's second reason that by being impartial we should have a better chance of promoting general welfare. Even though a greater probability of general welfare is admitted, this does not constitute a convincing reason why I should adopt an impartial attitude. For example, I may be an individual egoist and I may be shrewd enough to attain my welfare better by being partial.<sup>1</sup>

I should now like to argue that an AEW (see pp. 242-243 above)

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<sup>1</sup> Although Hume at times shows egoistic leanings (see Macnabb, op. cit., pp. 187-188), there are sound arguments (see F.C. Sharp, "Hume's Ethical Theory and Its Critics", Mind, 1921) which show that he is not an egoist. The important thing to see here is that one can argue in the above manner against a position like Brandt's whether one is or is not an egoist. Hume would probably have agreed with the logical soundness of my above arguments, for he says, "It would be a little difficult to find any [reasoning] which will appear to [a man in whom self-love has overridden his moral sense] satisfactory and convincing." (E.283). By arguments we cannot convince a man about the desirability (moral and prudential) of impartiality if, as Hume would say, "his heart rebel not against" partiality.

can be presented against Brandt's position, and that he cannot avoid this difficulty without making a fallacious AVFV (see pp. 241-242 above). Brandt's claim, as I understand, is the following: A moral principle is justified or reasonable when it satisfies the prompting of a certain qualified attitude. Now, I would like to ask, is this an evaluative statement? Or, is it a definition? If it is the former, then AEW can be applied to the use of the evaluative words "justified" and "reasonable" in that statement. If it is the latter, then he would use an AVFV in order to characterize any moral judgment as "justified" or "reasonable", in an evaluative sense of these words, on the ground that it fits his definition.

What I have just said against Brandt's claim that a moral principle is justified or reasonable when it satisfies the prompting of a certain qualified attitude, I think, equally applies to his claim that a reasonable man is one who respects impartial attitudes and the general principles which are based on them. That is to say, this claim (about "a reasonable man") is to be construed as either an evaluative statement or a definition. If it is the former, then it is subject to AEW; but if it is the latter, then Brandt would make an AVFV when he would evaluate a man as a reasonable man on the ground that the man fits his definition.

The chief attraction of the QAM lies in its claim that ethical beliefs and judgments must be tested by a human attitude of a

certain kind. It recognizes the important fact that ultimately matters of morals rest on what Hume would call "passions". But the very feature which makes it attractive is also a reason why it cannot be as objective as Brandt thinks it to be. It is quite possible that two people following the QAM may reach two different conclusions about an ethical belief. One of them may be as impartial, well-informed, normal as the other, and yet their attitudes towards a certain ethical belief may differ, because of their psychological and sociological background and their temperamental bias. For example, an impartial, well-informed and normal person may say "Killing under any circumstances is wrong", and another equally impartial, well-informed and normal person may assert, "Killing under certain circumstances, e.g., killing a dangerous criminal like Hitler, is right." Both of them may desire to universalize their moral principles. Thus both persons may fulfil the conditions of the QAM and yet may arrive at opposite moral judgments.

It seems to me that the QAM or any similar position cannot show that meta-ethical relativism (i.e., the view that there is no objective way of justifying one moral judgment against another) is false. It is quite possible that all people might be fully informed, impartial, normal, etc. and yet they would hold to different and conflicting ethical beliefs. Frankena claims that meta-ethical relativism is a weak theory when it depends on descriptive

relativism. I grant this; it is true that the latter does not imply the former. But Frankena further maintains that meta-ethical relativism cannot be proved because it is not possible to prove that if people had certain qualifications (such as those which the QAM imposes, though Frankena does not mention the QAM), then they would not have the same ethical beliefs. Thus he says:

It...is extremely difficult to show that people's basic ethical and value judgments would still be different even if they were fully enlightened, conceptually clear, shared the same factual beliefs, and were taking the same point of view. To show this, one would have to find clear cases in which all of these conditions are fulfilled and people still differ.<sup>1</sup>

I think that this argument does not show any weakness of meta-ethical relativism. On the contrary, if it is true that two fully impartial, factually well-informed, normal, (etc.) people can hold two different and conflicting ethical beliefs, then it has to be granted that even in that hypothetical world where all people have all those qualifications which Frankena and Brandt impose, they could still maintain different and opposite ethical views. It is not necessary for a meta-ethical relativist to present "clear cases", (of the sort which Frankena mentions) to prove his point, because his position is a negativistic one; he denies that there can be any objective method to justify one ethical judgment against another. He does not begin his theory with a reference to a hypotheti-

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<sup>1</sup>W.K. Frankena, Ethics, p. 93. I suppose that in this quotation, by the phrase "the same point of view", Frankena does not mean "the same moral point of view"; otherwise, he would be guilty of making circular reasoning.



cal situation. The onus of citing "clear cases" to prove their point lies on his opponents who begin by presenting a hypothetical situation where people could have those qualifications which would result in their having identical moral beliefs. The best that a meta-ethical relativist needs to do is to point out that even in such a hypothetical world, the result could be different. And I think that in view of what I have said this possibility cannot be denied.

I would now like to examine the parallel which Brandt draws between induction and his QAM. I think that the parallel is misleading. First, it is practically impossible not to follow induction. For the purpose of prediction working scientists have already accepted it. But the QAM is surely not unavoidable in ethical matters. It cannot be safely said that the QAM represents the accepted practice in testing ethical beliefs. In fact, there is no one single method in ethics which can claim the same logical status as induction does in science and ordinary life.

One of the purposes of science, it is agreed, is to predict, and induction is applied to serve this purpose. But there is no general agreement about the purpose of ethics; neither is it possible to fix one in a logically impeccable manner. Many people might agree with Brandt that what we "hope for" in ethics is to "adjudicate conflicts of interests". But, as I have said, there may be people who may regard the promotion of conflicts of

interests as a desirable purpose of ethics. These people will differ from one another in their views about the purpose of ethics, but this does not mean that one of them does not know the meaning of "the purpose of ethics". Now, when there is no agreement about the purpose of ethics, there cannot be any one method of settling ethical disputes which could be termed as "the rational or justified method in ethics."

I have said that by following the QAM it is possible for two people to arrive at two different conclusions about an ethical belief. But this sort of thing cannot happen when two people infer inductively. Given the evidence, a use of this method must lead to the same conclusion, no matter who makes the inference. If X has seen 900 out of 1000 crows to be black, and so has Y, both must conclude by the probabilistic kind of inductive reasoning that "Probably 9/10 crows of the world are black." Their conclusion may be invalid by the standard of deductive logic: it may also be that a satisfactory justification for inductive inferences cannot be given. But that is a different matter.

Finally, it must be said that even if the two methods - the QAM in ethics and induction in science - are logically on a par, this would not show that the QAM is a reasonable or justified method. The reasonableness or justification of induction has not yet been established. (It is not a proper place to go into this question of justification of induction. But I hope it will

serve the present purpose to refer to the admission of the proponents of the latest theories which attempt to justify induction, e.g., vindication, that their attempts have not succeeded. Note, for example, the statement of W.C. Salmon which I have quoted on p. 338 below. In the last chapter I have briefly shown why another widely accepted contemporary attempt to justify induction, i.e., the ordinary language solution, fails.<sup>1)</sup>

It is interesting to note that Brandt's QAM makes use of some of the things which Hume says about the meaning of moral terms and moral judgments. Hence I shall take this occasion to discuss briefly Hume's views on this subject. I shall try to show that although he recognizes the element of feeling (or attitude) and the two conditions - that of impartiality and that of one's being well-informed - which are involved in making a moral judgment, he does this only as a descriptive analysis, and wisely does not take the **further** step of regarding this as a normative view of moral judgments. Unlike Brandt, he does not attempt to justify moral judgments. I suppose that if pressed, Hume would make a distinction between the question whether certain judgments fit the description of moral judgments, and hence are moral judgments, and the question whether moral judgments are reasonable or justified. He could consistently make the same sort of distinction between whether an inference is an inductive inference and the question

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<sup>1</sup>I am of course aware that what I have said does not prove that the justification of induction has not yet been established. But

whether inductive inferences are justified. I shall soon discuss this point in more details.

It is not easy to present Hume's views on the meaning of moral judgments and moral terms, because he says different things on different occasions. I think that it is possible to discern at least six different views in Hume's writings. But his dominant view seems to be a modified subjectivism which takes into account not only the element of feeling (or attitude) but also certain conditions which the speaker must fulfil when making his moral judgment. I shall present this view in a little detail. But first let me briefly state his other five views.

There is a passage in the Treatise where he presents three different views. I shall quote the passage and number the views:

[1] An action, or sentiment, or character is virtuous or vicious; why? because its view causes a pleasure or uneasiness of a particular kind...[2] To have the sense of virtue, is nothing but to feel a satisfaction of a particular kind from the contemplation of a character. The very feeling constitutes our praise or admiration...[3] 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. 471).

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to prove this I would have to make a separate study which I cannot do here. However, I believe that what I have said would roughly indicate that it is not easy for a logically oriented philosopher to find satisfaction from the attempts to justify induction which have so far been made.

[1] may be called "causal subjectivism"<sup>1</sup> according to which a moral judgment asserts that a character or action is good or virtuous because it causes a certain feeling. In [1] Hume seems to take "X is virtuous" to mean "X causes in the beholder a pleasant feeling of a particular kind". According to [2], moral judgments cannot express propositions, whereas according to [3], moral judgments do express propositions.<sup>2</sup> [2] states that "The very feeling constitutes our praise or admiration." In this sense, when I say "X is virtuous", I do not judge about my feeling of approbation. I simply express my feeling, and this is not to assert a proposition. In [3], however, as Prior notes,<sup>3</sup> "feeling that", "feel that" do not refer to the strict psychological sense of the word "feel", but to "judge that" or "being aware that". Accordingly, here "X is virtuous" means "I judge that X is evoking a certain feeling in me".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>I borrow this phrase from Paul Edwards, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>2</sup>A.N. Prior comes close to seeing this, but he expresses this third view of Hume as that moral judgments express "meaning"(he does not say "proposition"). See Prior's Logic and the Basis of Ethics, p.59. He seems here to be muddled, or at least unclear, about "meaning" just as Russell was.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 58-61.

<sup>4</sup>See also Treatise, p. 469: "...when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it."

It is possible also to trace a very different kind of subjectivism in Hume which may be termed as "public subjectivism".<sup>1</sup> While expressing this view Hume maintains that "X is virtuous" means "All or most people have or would have a peculiar feeling of approval towards X". Broad attributes this view to Hume, although he does not consider it as a form of subjectivism since it leaves room for "argument and refutation in ethical matters."<sup>2</sup> However, I do not want to enter into a trivial controversy about whether or not we should call it a kind of subjectivism; it would be a controversy merely about how a certain thing is to be called. But what is unfortunate is that Broad takes [4] as Hume's only view about the meaning of moral terms. Stevenson also ascribes to Hume a view very similar to [4], but he qualifies it by the condition of the speaker's having adequate factual information. Thus he rephrases one of Hume's definition of virtue ("whatever mental action or quality gives to a spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation") as follows: "X is a virtue" has the same meaning as "X would be the object of approbation of almost any person who has full and clear factual information about X",<sup>3</sup> Unlike Broad, Stevenson does not deny that there are other versions of subjectivism in Hume.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>I borrow this term from Paul Edwards, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>2</sup>C.D. Broad, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>3</sup>C.L. Stevenson, Ethics and Language, pp. 273-274.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 274, footnote.

It may be noted that Hume at times shows a tendency to connect his [3] with [4]. In one place in the Treatise (pp.546-7) he states that vice and virtue of a character depends on the private feeling of the speaker, but adds in a footnote that there is a uniformity in the general sentiments of mankind. That is, most of us are constituted alike, and hence most of us would feel the same sort of moral feeling towards a character. In fact, this assumption underlies Hume's whole work. In the Enquiry, too, we read: "The notion of morals implies some sentiment common to all mankind, which recommends the same object to general approbation, and makes every man, or most men, agree in the same opinion or decision concerning it." (E. 272). I wish to comment here that Hume has not proved this assumption. As I said on p. 157 above, even if it is true that moral judgments are made as recommendations of something (of that what is considered to be good or virtuous, etc.) to all people, this does not prove that there is a common moral sentiment, although this kind of sentiment may be presupposed by the speakers when they make their moral recommendations.

There is one passage in the Enquiry where Paul Edwards has traced another theory of Hume about the meaning of moral judgments.<sup>1</sup> It is a kind of objectivism [5]. The theory is that "X is vicious" means "X possesses certain qualities whose tendency is pernicious to society." (This interpretation of Hume's view

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<sup>1</sup>P. Edwards, op. cit., pp. 148-149.

resembles Edwards' own theory of the meaning of moral judgments.)

Let me quote the passage in its entirety, as Edwards himself has done:

When a man denominates another his enemy, his rival, his antagonist, his adversary, he is understood to speak the language of self-love, and to express sentiments, peculiar to himself, and arising from his peculiar circumstances and situation. But when he bestows on any man the epithets of vicious or odious or depraved, he then speaks another language, and expresses sentiments, in which he expects all his audience are to concur with him. He must here, therefore, depart from his private and particular situation, and must choose a point of view, common to him with others; he must move some universal principle of the human frame, and touch a string to which all mankind have an accord and symphony. If he mean, therefore, to express that this man possesses qualities, whose tendency is pernicious to society, he has chosen this common point of view, and has touched the principle of humanity, in which every man, in some degree concurs. (E. 272).

It should be noticed that the first half of the passage does not express the form of objectivism which Edwards attributes to Hume. In the first half Hume still maintains that moral judgments express sentiment of a peculiar kind. It is only towards the end of the passage that Hume slides into the view which Edwards refers to. However, it is interesting to see how Hume, not very infrequently, slides from one view to another.

Now let me come to Hume's sixth view about the meaning of moral terms and judgments, which concerns the present discussion most of all. Hume frequently shows a tendency to hold the view that "X is virtuous" means "When X is judged impartially and with full information about X, then X arouses a pleasant feeling of



approbation." This is the view which I want to ascribe to him (although I admit that Hume holds all of the other five views). I propose to call it "Hume's impartial spectator theory of the meaning of moral terms and judgments" [6]. While discussing Hume's doctrine of the calm passions, I pointed out that he maintains that the rules of morality and an impartial standpoint are due to "a general calm determination of the passions, founded on some distant view or reflection." Now, this sixth theory of Hume about the meaning of moral terms and judgments is closely related to that view of his about the rules of morality and an impartial point of view. I shall, therefore, have to repeat a few things which I said in connection with Hume's view of the rules of morality and impartiality.

Hume has not presented [6] systematically, but I think that the following account will justify my ascription of [6] to him. We may interpret Hume as holding [6] when we find that he qualifies his causal subjectivism by saying that a character or an action is denominated morally good or evil when it is judged impartially, "without reference to our particular interest", and it causes the peculiar feeling of pleasure or pain.

Nor is every sentiment of pleasure or pain, which arises from characters and actions, of that peculiar kind, which makes us praise or condemn. The good qualities of an enemy are hurtful to us; but may still command our esteem and respect. 'Tis only when a character is considered in general, without reference to our particular interest, that it causes such a feeling or sentiment, as denominates it morally good or evil. (T. 472).

Hume observes that we have a concern for others. In the Treatise he tries to explain this by the mechanism of sympathy. "...we have no such extensive concern for society but from sympathy; and consequently 'tis that principle, which takes us so far out of ourselves, as to give us the same pleasure or uneasiness in the characters of others, as if they had a tendency to our advantage or loss." (T. 579).<sup>1</sup> Now, there is an obvious objection to this account. (It is in reply to this objection that Hume presents his impartial spectator theory.) The objection is as follows: "We sympathize more with persons contiguous to us, than with persons remote from us: With our acquaintance, than with strangers: With our countrymen, than with foreigners." (T. 581). The amount of harm or benefit resulting from an action also influences the intensity of our sympathy. Also, "our own interests" is an important influence on our sympathy. Nevertheless, "we give the

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<sup>1</sup>In this passage of the Treatise, Hume assumes that the pains or pleasure of others, in order to move me, must be converted into my own pains or pleasures by the psychological mechanism of sympathy. In the Enquiry he very often talks of "the sentiment of humanity" or "benevolence" instead of sympathy. He assumes there that pains and pleasures of others are things which are directly pleasant or painful. "Humanity and friendship" are natural and original in human nature: "...from the original frame of our temper we may feel a desire for another's happiness..." (E.302). "...everything, which contributes to the happiness of the society, recommends itself directly to our approbation and good-will." (E. 217).

same approbation to the same moral qualities in China as in Eng-  
land." (T. 581). We do not say that our diligent and faithful  
servant is more laudable than Marcus Brutus. (T. 582). We do not  
blame "a man for opposing us in any of our pretensions, when his  
own interest is particularly concern'd." (T. 583).

In order to take account of the above objection Hume finds it  
necessary to put a limitation on the purely subjective meaning of  
moral judgments. He also explains why we modify our moral judg-  
ments in this manner. He notices that if we are determined by the  
particular, accidental and relative circumstances in our moral  
judgments, then we meet with "contradictions to our sentiments."  
But we dislike such contradictions. Also, we have an ulterior  
desire for social converse. We are then motivated to judge what is  
right or wrong, virtuous or vicious, from an impartial point of  
view. (T. 583. Relevant passages from the Treatise have already  
been quoted on pp. 123-125 above.)

Hume also observes that while making a moral judgment it is  
necessary for the person to be well-informed about the case con-  
cerned. As he says in the Enquiry:

In moral decisions, all the circumstances and relations  
must be previously known; and the mind, from the con-  
templation of the whole, feels some new impressions of  
affection or disgust, esteem or contempt, approbation or  
blame. (E. 290).

Given the above account, I think that it is possible to ascribe

to Hume a theory like [6], i.e., "X is virtuous" means "When X is judged impartially and with full information about X, then X arouses a pleasant feeling of approbation."

The implications of such a theory are obvious. First, it may be impossible in practice to make a judgment which fulfils all the conditions of a moral judgment. Secondly, a judgment on a character or a quality or an action is not a moral judgment if it fails to be impartial and well-informed.

It is here very important for my discussion to make a distinction between the question whether certain evaluative judgments fit a given description of what moral judgments are and the question whether moral judgments are reasonable or justified. If we like, we may call the former question "a question whether certain judgments are moral judgments proper" without attaching any evaluative sense to the word "proper". The same sort of distinction can be made between the question whether certain inferences are inductive inferences proper (i.e., whether they fit the description of what is called "inductive inference") and the question whether inductive inferences are justified. In Hume's view, it seems to me, an evaluative judgment may be a proper moral judgment, but it is misleading to say that a moral judgment is reasonable or justified. Hume's view that actions, passions, desires, etc. cannot be reasonable or unreasonable (although actions may be laudable or blameworthy) seems to support this.

Furthermore, Hume's general view about the limitations of reasons and justification is a relevant consideration here. Consider for instance such statements of Hume as the following one:

When we see, that we have arrived at the utmost extent of human reason, we sit down contented; tho' we be perfectly satisfied in the main of our ignorance, and perceive that we can give no reasons for our most general and most refined principles, beside our experience of their reality; which is the reason of the mere vulgar..." (T. Introduction, xxii, my underlining).

And, more importantly, in the present context of his impartial spectator theory, Hume repeatedly says that an impartial standpoint and the rules of morality must not be considered to be due to the determination of "reason". (T. 419, 583; E. 239 ). Although the word "reason" here refers to Hume's muddled notion of the faculty of reason, yet it should be noted that "reasonable" is tied up with "the faculty of reason" in Hume's philosophy; things which are reasonable are things which are the products of reason. That Hume's notion of reason is a muddled one is not a point of consideration here. The important thing here is to determine whether or not Hume would approve of calling moral judgments "reasonable" or "justified". I think that he would not, because, according to him, moral judgments, moral rules, impartial standpoints, etc. are not determined by "reason", and things which are not determined by "reason", according to him, are things which cannot be reasonable or unreasonable.

What Hume has tried to do in his impartial spectator theory

is to give an analysis of a special class of evaluative judgments which it is useful to call "moral judgments" without thereby implying any evaluative attitude towards them. It is true that he has not given his account of this theory in a sufficiently non-evaluative language, but it should be noted that to be consistent with his own distinction between description and evaluation he cannot say that because certain evaluative judgments fit his description of moral judgments, therefore they are reasonable or justified. To say that a class of evaluative judgments are moral judgments proper is surely different from saying that they are reasonable or justified when they fulfil all the conditions of a moral judgment. It will not do to say that a judgment which is conventionally described as "a moral judgment" is justified, just as it will not do to say that an inference which is conventionally described as "an inductive inference" is justified or reasonable. The question of justification of something and the question of its fulfilling a certain description are entirely different questions. Hume puts this in his own way when he says that someone who reasons inductively "reasons justly and naturally" (T. 225), but this "just" reasoning is merely a matter of custom. In the case of moral judgments, too, if someone likes, he can say that "reason requires such an impartial conduct" but this is "reason improperly so-called." (T. 583, 417. E. 239).

I conclude that Hume has been correct in refusing to apply

his impartial spectator theory, in the way Brandt does, to the question of justifying moral judgments and moral beliefs. Hume wisely ends the matter by an analysis of moral judgments. (I do not mean to imply that Hume's analysis of moral judgments in his impartial spectator theory is correct.) A person may be impartial, well-informed, normal, etc. and thus his moral judgments may fulfil all the conditions required for a moral judgment proper. But whether such judgments are justified or not is a different question. If the moral judgment "Killing under any circumstance is wrong", which is made by an impartial, well-informed and normal person, is taken to be justified, then what happens to the moral judgment "Killing under certain circumstances is right" which can be made by an equally impartial, well-informed and normal person ?

## XII

VINDICATION OF THE ULTIMATE  
MORAL PRINCIPLES

I shall now examine two attempts to establish reasonableness or justification of ultimate moral principles or norms on the basis of pragmatic considerations. These pragmatic attempts to justify the ultimate norms are called "vindications". Such a theory was originally presented by Feigl who was inspired by Reichenbach's type of justification of induction along these lines. In his article "De Principiis Non Disputandum...?"<sup>1</sup>, Feigl investigates the logical structure of justification, and applies his findings to the different contexts of justification. In another paper "Validation and Vindication: An Analysis of the Nature and Limits of Ethical Arguments"<sup>2</sup>, he takes the same approach specifically to the problem of justification in ethics. Paul Taylor accepts Feigl's type of "vindication" for justifying ultimate moral principles, but differs from him in one important respect.<sup>3</sup> Taylor gets the support of John Hospers.<sup>4</sup> I shall try to show that neither Feigl nor the others succeed in their attempts, and that

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<sup>1</sup>Published in Philosophical Analysis, ed. Max Black.

<sup>2</sup>Published in Readings in Ethical Theory, ed. Sellars and Hospers.

<sup>3</sup>P. Taylor, Normative Discourse, Chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>4</sup>J. Hospers, Human Conduct, pp. 584-593.



a vindicative type of argument cannot give a satisfactory answer to the sceptic's denial of absolute reasonableness or ultimate justification of actions and moral principles. Let me first state Feigl's and Taylor's main points with which I am concerned. (I shall not mention Hospers' view separately since it is almost identical with that of Taylor.)

Feigl points out that the words "reason" and "justification" are ambiguous. Aside from its other meanings, "reason" may mean "grounds of validation" on the one hand and "purpose" on the other hand. "Justification" has the same ambiguity. So, according to Feigl, it is proper to distinguish between two kinds of justification. He calls them "validation" or "justificantia cognitionis" and "vindication" or "justificantia actionis".<sup>1</sup> "Justification" in the sense of "validation" consists in showing that an inference or a judgment is governed by some accepted rule or principle or norms. "Justification" in the sense of "vindication" consists in showing that the act of adoption of a principle or a norm, is well-adapted, or at least not worse-adapted than an alternative, to achieving a certain end or purpose. Vindication is thus an argument concerning the utility of the adoption of a means to fulfilling an end. Now Feigl points out that in any field, whether logical, methodological, epistemological or ethical, the process

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<sup>1</sup>De Principiis Non Disputandum...?", p. 116. Also "Validation and Vindication", p. 674.

of "justification" in the sense of "validation" terminates when the supreme or ultimate principles or norms in that field are exhibited. Any further question about the justification of those ultimate principles or norms is to be settled by a vindicative type of justification. That is to say, such ultimate norms can be justified only by showing that the act of their adoption serves as means to some ends or purposes. Thus, according to Feigl, while considering the problem of justification in the field of induction, we can say that particular inductive inferences can be justified or validated by a principle of induction, but the principle itself is an ultimate presupposition of the validation. It cannot therefore be validated; it can only be vindicated. The vindication of a principle of induction consists in showing that if our ends or purposes are to make true inductive inferences, e.g., to predict and to arrive at the true laws of nature, and to keep such inferences adaptable to the accumulating evidence, then a principle of induction, e.g., induction by simple enumeration, can serve this purpose, provided there is an order of nature. Thus Feigl says:

If there is an order of nature at all...then the method of simplest generalization is the only method of which it can be demonstrated (deductively) that (1) it can (but of course need not) succeed in disclosing that order and (2) that it is self-corrective. This obvious, simple tautology provides a pragmatic justification of the adoption of the rule of induction for anyone who wishes to attain the two mentioned aims, namely to make true inductive inferences (e.g. predictions) and to be able to keep such inferences adaptable to the accumulating evidence.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Validation and Vindication", p. 676.

The method of induction is the only one for which it can be proved (deductively!) that it leads to successful predictions if there is an order of nature, i.e., if at least some sequences of frequencies do converge in a manner not too difficult to ascertain for human beings with limited experience, patience, and ingenuity.<sup>1</sup>

That is, to vindicate induction is not to prove that induction works (this would be "validation") but to prove that if any method works then induction does.

The vindicationists maintain that in a similar way we may validate specific moral judgments by reference to higher moral principles or laws. But, sooner or later, validation terminates with the exhibition of the supreme norms. "The supreme norms define the standards of morality of a given system".<sup>2</sup> If a further question of a rational justification of such supreme norms or fundamental principles arises, then, according to them, we have to abandon the frame of validation and switch to vindication. We have to show that the act of adoption of the norms of a given moral system fulfils a certain purpose or purposes. Now, what are the purposes in relation to which a system of supreme norms is to be vindicated? According to Feigl, these are certain "social ideals" in which one may be interested. As he says:

The purposes which may be adduced in vindicating arguments for a whole system of moral norms are embodied in the individual interests and social ideals which we have come to

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<sup>1</sup>"De Principiis Non Disputandum...?", p. 130.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

form in response to life experience. The principle of justice (the golden rule) or other implicit definitions of "right actions" may, for example, be vindicated by reference to the ideal of a peaceful, harmonious and co-operative society. Or the principle of benevolence may be vindicated by reference to the ideal of the greatest happiness of the greatest number.<sup>1</sup>

Now, an important question is: Are these social ideals or the purposes themselves justified? Feigl does not deny that such a question can be meaningfully raised. He takes this question as a demand for "moral" justification of those ideals, i.e., he takes it that the questioner is asking him to show that those ideals are "morally good". Feigl's answer is that "The moral approval of a given ideal is of course trivially validated by the system which that ideal vindicates; and, contrariwise, trivially invalidated by an alternative incompatible system."<sup>2</sup> Or, as he puts it in another place:

...it may be asked whether those purposes are morally good. But clearly this question presupposes moral standards and without them remains unanswerable. If the moral standards drawn upon are those that formulate the system whose vindication is under discussion, then (given complete logical consistency) we obtain a validation of the value judgment concerning the adoption of its standards that is bound to be analytically true. If the standards are taken from a system that is incompatible with the one under discussion, we obtain an invalidation resulting from logical contradiction.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Validation and Vindication", p. 678. My underlining.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 678-679.

<sup>3</sup>"De Principiis Non Disputandum ...?", p. 138.

Paul Taylor agrees with Feigl that a justification of a system of ultimate norms has to be made along the lines of pragmatic justification. Taylor offers indeed an ambitious project of justification. According to him, there are four steps of justification of a moral judgment (or any value judgment): verification of a moral judgment by appealing to a rule or standard; validation of the rule or standard by means of a supreme norm; vindication of the norm or a system of norms by reference to a way of life; and a justification of the way of life in terms of a rational choice.<sup>1</sup> Taylor thinks that he can show us that all these four steps of justification can be successfully taken. I shall be concerned with the third and the fourth steps, especially with the fourth one. According to Taylor, the end or purpose by reference to which a value system is to be vindicated is "a way of life". He says, "I include in pragmatic justification standards of both instrumental value and contributive value."<sup>2</sup> According to him, a moral system may be shown to be a necessary, effective or sufficient means to bringing about an end, and also it may be shown that the system contributes to the value of a whole of which it is a part. He says:

...to vindicate a value system is to grade it as a good value system according to a standard of instrumental value and a standard of contributive value. The class of comparison consists of acts of adopting (or commitments to) other actual or possible value systems which have instrumental and contributive value (or disvalue) when judged by the

<sup>1</sup>Taylor, op, cit.,p.77. See also Hospers' agreement with Taylor in his Human Conduct, p. 585.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

same standards. We are immediately confronted with two questions. What is the end with reference to which the members of the class of comparison are being judged to have instrumental value or disvalue? What is the whole with reference to which they are being judged to have contributive value or disvalue? I submit that the answer to both of these questions is "a way of life".<sup>1</sup>

Taylor differs from Feigl in his view of the account which is to be given to justify the ends or purposes by reference to which a system of ultimate norms is vindicated. Whereas Feigl thinks that the purposes (which he considers to be certain social ideals) themselves are "trivially validated" by the system which those ideals vindicate, Taylor offers an account of "a rational choice" of the purposes which, in his view, are embodied in "a way of life". In other words, according to Taylor, the choice of a way of life is justified not because (as Feigl would say) the justification of the moral approval of that way of life is already present in the moral approval of the standards and the norms of the system (which are vindicated by that way of life), but because (and when) such a choice fulfils certain "necessary conditions." Taylor specifies these conditions in the following manner.<sup>2</sup> A rational choice of a way of life must fulfil the "conditions of freedom". A choice is free to the extent that it is not determined by unconscious motives, internal constraints and external constraints. A free choice is determined by the person's own preference. (2) A

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 130-131.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 165-174. See also Hospers, *op. cit.*, p. 587.

rational choice of a way of life must be enlightened. A choice is enlightened to the extent that the nature of the different alternative ways of life is fully known, the probable effects of living each way of life are fully known, and the means to bring about each way of life are fully known. (3) A rational choice of a way of life must fulfil the "conditions of impartiality". A choice is impartial to the extent that it is disinterested, detached or objective, and unbiased.

I now wish to examine Feigl's and Taylor's accounts of vindication of the ultimate moral norms or principles as given above. I would not raise any objection to the validating part of the vindicationists' plan, provided their vindication of the ultimate moral norms is successful. But unless the ultimate norms are shown to be justified or vindicated, the justification or validation of the lower-order moral judgments and standards will remain weak. Now, the important question is: Are the purposes (in relation to which the ultimate norms are to be vindicated) themselves justified? As I have pointed out, both Feigl and Taylor admit that such a question can be meaningfully raised, and they have their own answers. Let me first consider Feigl's position.

In Feigl's scheme of justification, the purposes cannot really be justified, neither does he make any serious attempt to justify them. He says that those purposes are certain social ideals and that the moral approval of the ideals is "trivially

validated" by reference to the standards and norms which those ideals vindicate. The "trivial validation" seems to refer to the circular reasoning involved here. However, it may be worth noting that the consequences which follow from such "trivial validation" are odd. The social ideals (purposes) of two conflicting moral systems may be equally "trivially validated" by reference to the standards and norms of the respective systems. Thus we are led to relativism. And Feigl seems to admit this. He is prepared to accept such a consequence of his programme of justification, for he says that his "analysis seems to support" relativism and pluralism.<sup>1</sup> In "De Principiis Non Disputandum...?" he seems to think that unless relativism is construed as an exaggerated position according to which "moral standards can be no more than a matter of arbitrary decision, of whim and caprice", there is nothing about which we need be perturbed in this implication of his analysis.<sup>2</sup> He reminds us that "the purposes that we adduce in the vindication of ethical standards are not a matter of personal caprice but are (usually) the resultants of age-long experience in the harmonization of intra-and inter-individual needs and interests, of experience, personal and social, guided by the adaptive and integrative influence of intelligence. Far from being 'arbitrary' or 'capricious' in the usual sense of these words, our terminal purposes are usually held with the most serious and profound con-

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<sup>1</sup>"De Principiis Non Disputandum...?", p. 138. Also "Validation and Vindication", p. 679.

<sup>2</sup>"De Principiis Non Disputandum...?", p. 138.



viction."<sup>1</sup>

I am not quite sure whether Feigl, by his phrase "the purposes that we adduce in the vindication of ethical standards", means that there is a particular set of purposes which alone is to be used in vindicating the different supreme norms of any moral system. His phrase "terminal purposes" and a footnote on p.139 ("De Principiis Non Disputandum...?") stating that "...the degree of universality of the ideals embodied in the 'moral sense' of people all over the earth is remarkable " seem to suggest such a view. But, then, he would be in difficulty. He cannot consistently maintain his "trivial validation" of the purposes (which makes all purposes equally justified) alongside a view that only a particular set of purposes or "terminal purposes" are to be used in vindicating the supreme norms of a system. Secondly, I am not sure whether Feigl has taken his above causal description of the purposes (i.e., that they are not arbitrary, that they are the resultants of a certain kind of human needs and interests, etc.) as tantamount to an account of their being justified. If he has not, then his insistence that the "terminal purposes" are non-arbitrary is pointless and irrelevant as a reply to those who would find his relativism objectionable. On the other hand, if he has taken his descriptive causal account of those purposes as tantamount to their being justified, then certain odd consequences follow. First of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

all let me point out that Feigl admits that there are conflicting moral systems. As he says, "But we do know of alternative systems of moral norms. An aristocratic ethics such as Nietzsche's and a democratic one such as Jefferson's are clearly incompatible with each other. The ethics of capitalism and the ethics of socialism may serve as a (related) further example."<sup>1</sup> Hence Feigl would have to admit that there are conflicting purposes or social ideals relating to the different conflicting ethical systems. I am not sure if he will admit that all these conflicting purposes are "non-arbitrary", etc. But it seems that in view of his causal description of the purposes and his discussion of relativism he would have to admit that the purposes of the ethics of Jefferson and those of Nietzsche's ethics or of a Nazi type of ethics are all equally "non-arbitrary". Now, I wish to maintain that if Feigl takes "the purposes are non-arbitrary" as equivalent to "they are justified", then all these conflicting purposes become equally justified. The logic of justification would be the same in all the cases of justification of these purposes. But there is a greater problem in taking "non-arbitrariness" as equivalent to "justified". I wish to dwell on this point in a certain detail, since, quite frequently, we come across philosophers who tend to identify these two things.

If someone thinks that a justification of the ethical ideals

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

is given when they are shown to be non-arbitrary, etc., then, it seems to me that he violates what may be termed as "a distinction between the cause of a thing and its value." Philosophers often rightly point out that ethical standards and ideals are not arbitrary, that they are not a matter of whim or caprice, that their being ethical is tied to some special kind of background. Let me quote some contemporary views of this nature.

It is surely clear that moral virtues must be connected with human good and harm, and that it is quite impossible<sup>1</sup> to call anything you like good and harm. (Philippa Foot)

...anyone who thinks it would be easy to describe a new virtue connected with clasping the hands three times in an hour should just try it. (P. Foot)<sup>2</sup>

...there could not be a human society in which truthfulness were not in general regarded as a virtue. (Peter Winch)<sup>3</sup>

...although it is doubtless impossible to deduce moral judgments from purely factual propositions about human nature, human desires and biological needs, moral principles and truths, are nevertheless in a sense rooted in such facts. (J. Kemp)<sup>4</sup>

...there is something odd about the suggestion that anything at all could serve as a fundamental moral principle. (D.H. Monro)<sup>5</sup>

The philosophers whom I have quoted do not share the same ethical and meta-ethical views. They all do not equate "non-arbitrariness" with "justification". (Surely Monro would not equate them.) Their

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<sup>1</sup>P. Foot, "Moral Beliefs", in Theories of Ethics, ed. P. Foot., p. 92.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>P. Winch, "Nature and Convention", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, vol. LX, 1959-60, p. 250.

<sup>4</sup>Kemp, op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>5</sup>Monro, op. cit., p. 122.

works from which I have quoted will show this. What I have tried to indicate is simply that they all come to note like Feigl, that moral standards and ideals are not arbitrary or a matter of personal whim and caprice.

I have no reason to doubt that this view is true. But what I wish to insist upon is that to say that a certain ideal or a standard is not arbitrary is not to say that it is justified. And to infer from "X is not arbitrary" to "Therefore X is justified" is to violate the Humean distinction between facts and values. There is a distinction between something's being determined by a certain kind of background and its being justified. The problem of justification of a moral attitude and of a moral ideal is not solved by showing that these are not arbitrary. A sceptic may grant the non-arbitrary character of the different ethical ideals, and yet he may ask for their justification when it is said that some of those things are justified or reasonable. Like the above-mentioned philosophers, Hume also observed that the rules of morality and the necessity for an impartial standpoint are determined by human needs and interests. (T. 583). And about the "artificial virtue" of justice Hume says, "...there are some virtues, that produce pleasure and approbation by means of an artifice or contrivance, which arises from the circumstances and necessity of mankind [my underlining]. Of this kind I assert justice to be." (T. 477). Hume maintains the same view about the institution of promising. (See above, pp. 199-201.)

Indeed, someone who denies the reasonableness or justification of moral standards and ideals does not thereby imply that those standards and ideals are arbitrary or a matter of whim and caprice, just as someone who is a subjectivist in ethics does not imply that those things are arbitrary. As one subjectivist philosopher says, "To say that moral beliefs, or attitudes, are ultimately subjective is not to say that they are arbitrary, or that we can assume them at will. We have the moral attitudes we have because we are the sort of men we are."<sup>1</sup> Surely the question of origin and the question of value are different questions. When a country gets into a war, the decision of its rulers might not have been arbitrary or based on their whims: their decision might have been arrived at after proper deliberation and reflection, that is, it will have a psychological and sociological background. But someone may legitimately question whether the decision was a justified one. As Monro, while referring to Foot's view that principles like "No one should run around trees left handed, or look at hedgehogs in the light of the moon" would not count as moral principles<sup>2</sup>, says:

Mrs. Foot is quite right if her point is that those philosophers who say that anything at all could count as a moral principle are neglecting the social and psychological background that our moral principles actually have. But those philosophers are quite right (in their turn) in insisting that, if in another universe perhaps, or in

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<sup>1</sup> Monro, op. cit., p. 231.

<sup>2</sup> P. Foot, "Moral Arguments", Mind, 1958, p. 512.

very unusual social circumstances, the characteristic moral attitudes and the characteristic moral authority did attach themselves to principles with a very different content, those principles would have the same kind of justification as our own moral attitudes have.<sup>1</sup>

I would like to add that even if it were impossible that the moral attitudes and moral authority could be attached to some principles and ideals of a different kind from the ones which we have, that would not be an answer to the question whether those things were justified.

I pointed out that some ordinary language philosophers make a mistake when they try to avoid the issue of justification of induction by saying that it is impossible to choose to live on a consistent counter-inductive policy. Here, again, it will be a mistake to suppose that because our moral standards and ideals are non-arbitrary, they are therefore justified; or that because they are non-arbitrary, therefore the question of their justification does not arise. The question of their justification or reasonableness does arise as soon as it is claimed that some of them are justified or reasonable. Unlike the problem of induction, the problem of justification of the non-arbitrary principles and ideals of morals is not practically trivial. It is perhaps one of the problems of highest practical importance. Despite Feigl's observation of "a remarkable degree of universality of the moral

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<sup>1</sup>Monro, *Ibid.*, p. 146. My underlining. I suppose that Monro would say the same thing about Foot's view of "a new virtue connected with clasping the hands three times in an hour" which she expresses in another article from which I have already quoted.

ideals", there are many incompatible and competing moral systems and divergent moral ideals which conflict and may even lead to serious world crises. But the same cannot be said about induction. It has no serious competitor when the purpose is to predict and to arrive at the laws of nature.

I now wish to make a few additional comments on Feigl's programme of vindication of the ultimate norms of a moral system. Feigl has not considered the context-dependent nature of "justification" (and "reasonableness"). He has thought, as I have pointed out, that someone who asks for a justification of the purposes or the ideals (which vindicate the supreme norms and without whose justification the whole programme of vindication becomes weak) makes a demand that those ideals are to be shown to be morally good or justified. But "justification", like "reasonable", may refer also to prudential justification, i.e., justification from considerations of self-interest. Suppose that someone grants that those ideals are morally justified. (A sceptic will not, however, grant this, as I have tried to show.) He may still ask why he should accept those moral ideals. And he may ask this from considerations of prudence or self-interest. I have discussed this kind of problem in the last chapter, and tried to show that a satisfactory reply to this kind of question cannot be given. Thus, even if Feigl succeeds in showing us that some "terminal purposes" are morally good or justified, he will still have the problem of proving that

those purposes are "justified" from the point of view of self-interest - a problem which, I think, is insurmountable.

Finally, there is a serious difficulty in Feigl's type of programme of vindicating the supreme moral norms. The difficulty arises when someone wishes to carry out this programme. I consider this to be a difficulty which blocks any serious programme of vindication ab initio. It concerns the fact that the norms and purposes of different actual and possible moral systems are not explicitly stated in any rigorous manner. It is doubtful whether they ever could be so stated because of the ever-changing nature of all moral systems, due to the changes in human needs and interests. Consequently, it does not seem to be possible to show which standards are supposed to be vindicated as means by reference to which ideals or ends in a moral system. Unless we know this, we cannot even begin to judge the success of such means-ends type of justification. That is, we cannot even begin to see how the norms can contribute as means to the fulfilling of the ends. This difficulty does not prevail in the case of vindicating a principle of induction. There is a general agreement about the purposes of induction, i.e., to predict the future and to discover the laws of nature. Although the success of a vindicative argument about an inductive policy remains very doubtful (as I shall soon briefly indicate), at least an attempt along these lines can be made. But the same cannot be said about vindicating the moral norms of a system.



I conclude that Feigl's attempt has the merit of showing us the limits of justification: the trouble is that he does not properly realize that he has not solved the problem of justification of the supreme moral norms.

Let me now examine Taylor's attempt. He avoids Feigl's type of "trivial validation" of the purposes because he does not want to accept relativism. He, on the contrary, argues for what he calls "valuational absolutism" according to which "a value judgment is simply true or false, not true or false for someone. It is true when it can be shown to be justified, false when it can be shown to be unjustified. It is shown to be justified when it is verified by appeal to a standard or rule which can be validated within a value system, which in turn is vindicated by reference to a way of life, and this way of life can rationally be preferred to all others."<sup>1</sup>

Now, it seems to me that by trying to avoid the difficulties of relativism in respect of the problem of justification, Taylor's programme gets into certain new, and even more serious difficulties. This concerns Taylor's notion of a rational choice of a way of life. I think that Taylor regards certain evaluative principles or standards as conditions of rational choice. We must not forget that the words "rational" and "reasonable", like the word "good",

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, op. cit., p. 163.

are evaluative, unless these are used in some sense like Hume's. So when someone says that a certain choice is rational or rationally justified because it fulfils certain conditions, he quite likely attaches value to those conditions, just as when someone says that "John is a good man because he is kind and impartial" he attaches value to kindness and impartiality. It seems clear to me that when someone says that a choice is rationally justified since it fulfils the conditions x, y, z, he very likely means "A choice ought to be made in such a way that it fulfils the conditions x, y, z." This shows that Taylor's conditions of a rational choice are not value-neutral but are themselves evaluative. It matters very little whether someone calls them "conditions" or "standards" or "principles". Now, when it is admitted that these conditions are evaluative, at once all the questions about their justification and rationality arise. One may ask, what is so rational about choosing a way of life freely, impartially and in an enlightened manner? (Note also that there is some evaluative force already present in the words "impartially" and "enlightenedly", and, it might even be argued, in "freely" too.)

Let me dwell on this sort of consideration in respect of the condition of enlightenment. Hare, too, seems to claim that an enlightened decision of principles is a justified one. As he says:

...a complete justification of a decision would consist of a complete account of its effects, together with a

complete account of the principles which it observed, and the effects of observing those principles...This complete specification it is impossible in practice to give... Suppose, however, that we can give it. If the inquirer still goes on asking 'But why should I live like that?' then there is no further answer to give him, because we have already, ex hypothesi, said everything that could be included in this further answer...To describe such ultimate decisions as arbitrary, because ex hypothesi everything which could be used to justify them has already been included in the decision, would be like saying that a complete description of the universe was utterly unfounded, because no further fact could be called upon in corroboration of it. This is not how we use the words 'arbitrary' and 'well-founded'. Far from being arbitrary such a decision would be the most well-founded of decisions, because it would be based upon a consideration of everything upon which it could possibly be founded.<sup>1</sup>

In this quotation and in the context from which it is taken, Hare's notion of "well-founded" seems to be non-evaluative, since it is, as far as I can see, equivalent to "having taken into account all possible empirical considerations". Now, as I have already indicated, a sceptic need not and does not claim that moral principles and ideals to which people attach themselves are arbitrary and are not based (in some sense, e.g., causally) on empirical considerations. Also, he need not deny that a decision of principles of the kind which Hare refers to may be non-arbitrary and based on all possible empirical considerations. But, if in the above quotation, Hare is equating such enlightened and non-arbitrary decision of principles with a justified one, then he would be mistaken. I am not sure that he is doing this. He seems to be merely pointing out the limitations of justification, which would be a position

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<sup>1</sup>R.M. Hare, The Language of Morals, p. 69.

not very different from my sceptic's. But Taylor clearly takes enlightened decision of principles or a way of life as a necessary condition of a rationally justified choice of a way of life. His position is that of an anti-sceptic or as he calls it "valuation-al absolutist". If someone takes the "enlightenment" or the "non-arbitrariness" of a decision or choice of a way of life as equivalent to its "being justified", then he would not be giving a value-neutral description of a rationally (and morally) justified choice. It would therefore be necessary for him to show what is so rational or justified about being enlightened. There are plenty of enlightened and non-arbitrary decisions which are not taken by many people as justified. Someone who has adequately and properly studied all the possible moral systems or ways of life and finally chosen to live by the principles and ideals of the way of life of the Garos<sup>1</sup> or the principles and the ideals of the Muslim way of life (which permits polygamy), has not made an arbitrary decision; his decision is an enlightened and well-founded one. But surely it may meaningfully be questioned whether his decision is a really justified or good one.

It is obvious that similar objections may be raised against Taylor's other two conditions, i.e., impartiality and freedom. Moreover, the conditions of impartiality and freedom of choice, if not that of an enlightened choice, are clearly moral conditions or, rather, moral standards.

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<sup>1</sup>An East Pakistani matriarchal tribal people.

Now, Taylor himself says that these conditions of a rational choice of a way of life must not themselves be a part of a way of life. He realizes that to offer conditions for a rational choice which are themselves part of a way of life is to "beg the question" or "to undercut the whole project".<sup>1</sup> Hospers, who supports Taylor's project of justification, also observes this. As he says, "Your supreme norm, or the adoption of it, has been vindicated in terms of a way of life, so you can't turn around and try to justify that way of life by means of a supreme norm."<sup>2</sup> But, if impartiality and freedom are already moral standards or part of a way of life, as I think they are, then this does "undercut the entire project" of Taylor. He has confused moral principles themselves with value-neutral conditions.

It seems that Taylor tries to deny this sort of charge by claiming that those conditions are defining characteristics of "a rational choice". As he says, "...they are the conditions which I presume anyone, in any way of life, would accept as defining [my underlining] a rational choice, in the ordinary sense of the word "rational".<sup>3</sup> In other words, he claims to be taking "rational choice" in a purely descriptive sense (since a definition is not an evaluative statement). If this is the case, then he would violate the distinction between facts and values the moment he would proceed to characterize evaluatively a particular choice

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, op. cit., p. 175.

<sup>2</sup>Hospers, op. cit., p. 586.

<sup>3</sup>Taylor, op. cit., p. 176.

as rationally justified by showing that the choice fits his definition. In other words, by his valuational absolutist account he would never be able to attach value to a "rational choice" without making a fallacious AVFV (argument violating the distinction between facts and values, see above pp. 241-242). This would be a total failure of Taylor's ambitious project of justification.

From what I have said in criticism of Feigl's and Taylor's programmes of vindication it should be clear that an attempt to show an absolute justification or reasonableness of actions and moral judgments along the lines of vindication must fail. The vindicationists can carry on their project of justification upto a certain point, but they arrive at the limits of justification when the question of justifying the ends or purposes (i.e., the justification of the justificans which does the vindication) arises. Whether the ends are taken to be some social ideals or a way of life which embodies those ideals, it is impossible to prove that those ends themselves are justified. To prove this the vindicationists are bound to reason in a circle, or, if they wish to avoid this difficulty, they must violate the legitimate distinction between facts and values. But unless it is proved that those ends are themselves justified, the justification of the supreme norms in terms of those ends, and consequently, the justification of all the rest of the things which depend on those supreme norms, becomes weak.

Let me now make a few remarks on the supposed parallel between the vindication of an inductive policy and that of the supreme moral norms. While examining Feigl's attempt I said that in the absence of a strict specification of the supreme norms and ideals of a given system the attempt to vindicate the norms cannot even be begun. This is a kind of problem which does not arise in the case of vindicating induction. Now I wish to say that there is an even more serious problem for which it is impossible to vindicate the supreme moral norms even if it is granted that a principle of induction can be vindicated. The goals or purposes or ends of induction, in general terms, are two-fold: (1) to discover true laws of nature, and (2) to predict successfully. (Of course, we may think of many specific goals of particular inductions, such as, discovering the cause of a certain disease, the probability of curing a certain illness, etc.. But all such particular ends of induction may be brought under those two general headings.) Now, the question whether there are competitors to those two goals of induction simply does not arise. Of course, there may be different possible methods (one of them being induction) of prediction, and, conceivably, different methods of arriving at the laws of nature. In this sense there may be different competing or alternative methods for achieving (1) and (2). But, clearly, to (1) and (2) themselves there is no possible competitor or alternative. Induction may compete with clairvoyance or crystal-gazing; but with what will (1) and (2) themselves compete?

So the goals or ends by reference to which a policy of induction is to be vindicated cannot themselves have any alternative. Now let us consider the goals or ends of the supreme moral norms. The vindicationists say that these goals are some social ideals or a way of life in which those ideals are embodied. To put this more clearly, their claim is that the goals or ends of moral principles or norms consist in letting people live "a way of life". Here I cannot help raising the questions: Which way of life? Which ideals? There are many actual and possible ways of life and ideals. There are many alternatives to the supposed purpose(s) or end(s) in terms of which the supreme moral principles or norms are to be vindicated, whereas alternatives for the goals of induction do not exist. Even if it is said that there are a few more goals of induction apart from (1) and (2), it must be seen that those goals would not be competing with or alternatives to (1) and (2); they would be just some goals of induction additional to (1) and (2). But the different ways of life and social ideals may be, and sometimes actually are, alternatives to and in serious competition with one another. Thus even if it is granted that induction may be vindicated, there is no possibility of properly beginning a vindication of the ultimate moral norms.

But there are serious problems even in an attempt to vindicate induction. To show this I would have to enter into a different field. All I can do here is to give the following



gist of an account showing the problems of vindicating induction while avoiding the technicalities involved as far as possible. These problems have sometimes been noticed by the vindicationists themselves and sometimes pointed out by their critics.

The topic began with Reichenbach's attempt to vindicate the rule of enumerative induction by coupling it with the frequency theory of probability. The rule to be justified by him is this: If we wish to infer the limit of the relative frequency with which a certain attribute occurs in a series of events, we posit the relative frequency which has been found in the observed sample as the limit.<sup>1</sup> Reichenbach's argument is that if there is a limit of the frequency in a sequence of events, then a repeated and consistent use of his inductive rule will enable us to find estimates of the limit to any desired degree of approximation. The concept of limit is such that when a limit exists in a sequence, then there must be a point in the sequence from which the inferred values must match the actual limit within a desired degree of accuracy.<sup>2</sup>

Now the difficulty about this justification which arises here is one which Reichenbach himself came to notice.<sup>3</sup> He noticed that there is an unlimited number of convergent or asymptotic rules, apart from his own rule. These give us estimates of limits of

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<sup>1</sup>H. Reichenbach, The Theory of Probability, p. 446. In this place he formulates the rule in more technical language.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 445-446.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 447.

relative frequencies which initially differ from the estimates made by his type of induction but which converge to the same limit as these rules are continued to be applied indefinitely. The rule of induction by enumeration, as Reichenbach has formulated it, is called "the straight rule" and the other asymptotic rules are called "crooked rules". Now the problem is that the vindicationist has to show that there are reasons for preferring the straight rule to each of the infinitely many crooked rules.

Reichenbach tried to solve this problem by appealing to "descriptive simplicity".<sup>1</sup> He thought that since all the asymptotic rules ultimately converge to the same sequence of events, a selection of his straight rule is justified on grounds of descriptive simplicity. But this ground is faulty, and this has been admitted by Reichenbach's supporters themselves.<sup>2</sup> The criterion of descriptive simplicity can be applied only where the alternative formulations of theories, statements or rules are empirically equivalent. But the asymptotic rules are not empirically equivalent, because "of the complete arbitrariness of inference they tolerate as a class." They do not converge in the same sorts of way, and so they initially lead to different predictions. This means that the criterion of descriptive simplicity cannot be invoked for the purpose of selecting one rule from the infinite class of asymptotic rules. Thus it is clear that Reichenbach's attempt to vin-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 475-476.

<sup>2</sup>Salmon, "On Vindicating Induction", Philosophy of Science, 1963, p. 252.

cate induction is not successful.

Wesley Salmon has tried to offer a plausible condition on the basis of which Reichenbach's straight rule might be justifiably selected. He offered "the criterion of linguistic invariance" which places the following requirement upon inductive rules: "Whenever two inductive inferences are made according to the same rule, if the premisses of the one differ purely linguistically from the premisses of the other, then the conclusion of the one must not contradict the conclusion of the other."<sup>1</sup> Now it happens that except for the straight rule, all the other asymptotic rules (the crooked ones) are language-dependent, and hence they all violate the criterion of linguistic invariance.

The discovery of this criterion at first seemed to be a large step toward a vindication of induction. But Barker's argument showed its weak point. Barker argued that even the straight rule is not linguistically invariant.<sup>2</sup> To show this, he introduced the Goodman Paradox. Whenever we have seen emeralds, we have seen them to be green. Using the straight rule we have to generalize that emeralds are always (even during the 21st century) green.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., For a more technical but precise formulation of the criterion see Salmon's "Vindication of Induction" in Current Issues in the Philosophy of Science, ed. Feigl and Maxwell, p. 256.

<sup>2</sup>S. Barker, "Comments on Salmon's 'Vindication of Induction' ", in Current Issues in the Philosophy of Science, ed. Feigl and Maxwell, pp. 257-258.

Consider now the predicate "grue" which stands for things green prior to 2000 A.D. or blue after 2000 A.D. It can safely be said that up to now we have observed emeralds to be grue. Therefore, using Reichenbach's straight rule we may infer that emeralds are always grue. But this means that emeralds are blue, and not green, after 2000 A.D. Thus following Reichenbach's straight rule we may be led to conflicting predictions about emeralds after 2000 A.D. Therefore, Reichenbach's rule itself violates the criterion of linguistic invariance.

Salmon tried to get out of this difficulty by suggesting a further restriction, namely, that the straight rule should be applied only to purely ostensive predicates. Such predicates have the following characteristics: (1) They can be defined ostensively. (2) Their positive and negative instances can be indicated non-verbally. (3) The respect in which the positive instances resemble each other and differ from the negative instances is open to direct inspection. Salmon argued that Goodman's predicates fail to meet these characteristics of ostensive predicate. Grue things do not look alike, while green or blue things do.

This raises the question of the plausibility of a basic observation language. Enough ink has been spilled over this issue since the early days of logical positivism. It seems that today there are very few who would still like to support the idea of such a language. However, I do not need to go into this contro-

versy about the plausibility of a basic observation language. Even if the Goodman paradox could be solved so as to eliminate all asymptotic rules except the straight rule, there would remain a further difficulty. It is that alternative inductive rules may be formulated which fulfil all the conditions of acceptability which Salmon imposes. This line of attack has been made by Ian Hacking.<sup>1</sup> It is not necessary here to describe this kind of difficulty involved in Salmon's vindication of induction. Salmon himself has admitted the weakness of his attempt. In a recent publication he writes:

At one time I thought that the convergence requirement, the normalizing conditions, and the criterion of linguistic invariance were sufficient to justify induction by enumeration as the basic inductive rule for inferring limits of relative frequencies. I no longer hold this view. Alternative inductive rules that are not eliminated by these considerations can be formulated. Ian Hacking has shown, for instance, that rules deviating from induction by enumeration, in a way that depends upon the internal structure of the observed sample, can satisfy all of these requirements.<sup>2</sup>

The merit of the vindicationists lies in their recognition of the genuineness of the problems which the sceptic raises both in the field of induction and in morals. In this respect, they see further than the ordinary language philosophers who try to solve those problems by denying them to be problems at all. Never-

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<sup>1</sup>I. Hacking, "Salmon's Vindication of Induction", Journal of Philosophy, 1965, pp. 265-266.

<sup>2</sup>W.C. Salmon, "The Foundations of Scientific Inference", Mind and Cosmos, ed. R.G. Colodny, p. 239.

theless, it must be admitted that the programme of justification which the vindicationists offer cannot be successfully carried out either in ethics or in methodology. But there is hardly any parallel between these two contexts of justification.

#### Concluding Remarks

In the final part of my enquiry I have tried to establish that those who identify "reasonable conduct" with "morally justified conduct" and attempt to show that conduct itself (or directly) is reasonable or unreasonable have to face certain genuine sceptical problems. Any attempt along these non-Humean lines to give a sense to "reasonable conduct" (or "rational conduct") is bound to fail, because sooner or later we reach the limits of justification. There is no sensible way to deny this. I have tried to show from the very accounts of those who deviate from Hume's view or criticize him that an admission of the limitations of justification is inherent in their own accounts. They cannot deny this without violating Hume's legitimate distinction between facts and values, between description and evaluation. An admission of the limits of justification in morals is nothing but an admission of the limitations of the concept of reasonableness, in the sense in which Hume's challengers understand this concept. And this means that there

is no such thing as absolute reasonableness in the field of conduct. When this is granted, then it is not difficult to see that Hume's critics are philosophically confused when they identify "reasonableness" with "being morally justified", "being justified by good reasons", etc. Their confusion is brought to the light when it is noted that they cannot give a complete account of "reasonableness" in their own sense of this phrase. Those who claim that conduct itself is reasonable or unreasonable bear the burden of proving that there is such a thing as absolute reasonableness of conduct, that a complete account of reasonable conduct can be given. (Otherwise, what are we to understand by "directly reasonable conduct", i.e., "reasonable conduct" in their sense?) I have tried to show that this cannot be proved. To show this I have relied mainly on Hume's own lesson, i.e., his distinction between facts and values, and have taken the guideline from his own sayings, such as this one:

When we see, that we have arrived at the utmost extent of human reason, we sit down contented; tho' we be perfectly satisfied in the main of our ignorance, and perceive that we can give no reason for our most general and most refined principles, beside our experience of their reality; which is the reason of the mere vulgar... (T. Introduction, xxii).

I am aware that many people will feel a discomfort if they hear that conduct itself is not reasonable or unreasonable. In our ordinary usage, "reasonable conduct" is frequently taken to mean "good conduct". I do not deny this. And perhaps ordinary

people by their use of this phrase also mean that reasonable conduct is somehow "objectively good". Philosophers from Hume's own time down to the present day, from Reid to Baier, have not refrained from criticizing Hume for his violation of this ordinary usage. I have merely tried to show that their criticisms have been wrongly placed. In our ordinary usage we may afford to mean by "reasonable conduct" morally good conduct, and by using this phrase for a certain sort of conduct we may also imply that it has some objective value. Indeed, our ordinary language is full of muddles and confusions. But one of the tasks of philosophers is to clarify such conceptual confusions and not to smuggle them into philosophy. I suppose that Hume would have no philosophical objection to anything which goes in ordinary usage; but he would take things seriously when it comes to philosophical analysis. To achieve clarity was Hume's passion, although he did not always succeed in doing so.

The type of meta-ethics (dealing with the question of justification) which I have abstracted from Hume's writings is certainly compatible with the development of a humane and unselfish morality. Hume's views, it seems to me, put things in the right place: morality is primarily a matter of feelings and attitudes. This, of course, does not mean that reasoning or reflection has no place in morality. And Hume has not denied this. His merit lies in giving the emphasis in the right place, although his zealous



controversy with the rationalists has sometimes made him say certain things which he has not meant. It may be said that his meta-ethics is not incompatible with "Satan's morality" just as it is not incompatible with a humane and benevolent morality. This is quite true. Hume's position would be neutral as far as the logic of justification of a type of morality is concerned. But it seems to me that Hume personally would prefer to see a morality in the world which is kind, humane, unselfish and impartial. My interpretation of his notion of moral judgment supports this. (Mossner's biography of Hume<sup>1</sup> shows that Hume was a kind man by temper.) But I must emphasize that the sort of morality which Hume would like to have would be (and he would consider it to be) a matter of his preference and feelings. Surely he would not try to give it a logical foundation. And he would be quite right in this.

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<sup>1</sup>E.C. Mossner, The Forgotten Hume. Also his The Life of David Hume.

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