

Which Passions? What Values?

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1. 'It is not uncommon for the interpretation of the doctrines of major philosophers to harden into dogmas. In the end it becomes difficult to achieve an unbiased reading of the original text, because of the almost irresistible tendency to find what one's teachers and commentators have led one to expect.' (PV193). Perhaps that thought lay behind Páll's strenuously encouraging my own efforts to find in the *Treatise* a different Hume – at least a Hume different in several important respects – from the one to be found in the challenging, forcefully argued pages of *Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise*. In my remarks today I shall first identify a series of claims that to my mind constitute the chief merits, the most distinctive and significant contributions, of Páll's seminal text on Hume's moral philosophy, contributions centered on the role of the indirect passions in the elucidation of moral evaluations. I'll then suggest some – as I see them – striking lacunae, textual and doctrinal, in Páll's rendering of Hume. In brief initial formulation, I shall suggest that, in so compellingly making a case for the role Hume assigns the indirect passions in the elucidation of moral evaluations, Páll neglects the role Hume assigns to desires. Emphasizing the affective Páll neglects the conative. In textual terms, he neglects *Treatise* 2.3.3 ('Of the influencing motives of the will') and *Treatise* 3.1.1 ('Moral distinctions not deriv'd from reason'). And I shall pursue some of the ramifications of that neglect.

2. Before turning to the passions and evaluations themselves, we must note several very general features of Páll's interpretive-cum-philosophical project. As many others have, he emphasizes the naturalism that structures Hume's reflections on morality. Páll's Hume provides 'an account of the nature and origin of evaluations...an account of the way the

concepts of virtue and vice have their source in human emotions' (PV212). Part of the point is driven home by Páll's frequent framing reference to 'the two later books of the *Treatise*' (PV12): those two Books constitute the whole of Hume's inclusive theory of the passions; to read Book III in isolation from Book II is to ensure a misreading of Hume's moral theory. One thinks, here, of the pervasive associationism of Hume's science of human nature. But one should think as well of what David Wiggins terms 'Hume's Genealogy of Morals'(E30). In Páll's words: 'Once the nature of evaluation has been established there is no room for a *normative* science of Ethics, as distinct from an empirical inquiry into the principles in accordance with which people evaluate' (PV190).

Unlike many contemporary commentators, Páll plays down the significance of Hume's few remarks ostensibly about the language of evaluation. His Hume is an emotionist, not an emotivist. (That said, Páll interestingly suggests that Hume, just as Reid, may not have been alive to the distinction between expression of emotion and self-attribution of that emotion; and that, unduly impressed by the notion of secondary qualities, Hume might have tended to think of evaluative statements as self-attributive ones.)

Again unlike many contemporary commentators, Páll plays up Hume's doctrine of the simplicity of the passions, the claim that passions are 'simple impressions'. Many (Gardiner, Kenny) find this the most unprepossessing of Hume's doctrines. At place after place Páll makes clear how rigorously and systematically Hume deploys that doctrine in the explication of moral, and more generally, emotional phenomena. (That said, Páll also, time and again, makes plain Hume's contributions to the analysis of evaluative concepts.)

3. Let us turn to Páll's account of Hume on moral evaluations and of what, in Book II, Hume terms the passions. Omitting a crucial qualification for a moment, Páll's Hume

takes moral evaluations to be analogous to the indirect passions of pride, humility, love, and hatred. They are *valuings* of persons: positive or negative valuings of oneself or of others. As positive valuings they are analogous to pride and love; as negative valuings they are analogous to what Hume terms humility and hatred. What makes them analogous to, but not instances of, the four indirect passions mentioned is their objectivity (a feature to which I shall return). They are subject to associationist explanation – more precisely, explanation in terms of a double relation of impressions and ideas – just as the four indirect passions are. In the case of the four indirect passions in question there is a relation of similarity between the so-called ‘prior impression’ and the simple indirect passion in question (both are pleasant, or both painful, sentiments); and there is some other relation (identity, causation, some other) between the so-called ‘prior idea’ and the idea of the so-called ‘object’ of the passion. Pleased by the sporting achievements of my son I feel pride directed towards myself. Displeased by the appearance of my unmown lawn, I feel humility (shame). Or, to take an instance of distinctively moral valuing of oneself, one’s having acted justly in difficult circumstances generates one’s morally valuing oneself (one’s approval of oneself), just as one’s behaving badly prompts one’s negative valuing of oneself (for having acted in that way), one’s disapproval of oneself for having done what one did.

In these illustrations I focus, as Páll tends to, on pride and humility, and on their moral analogs. And in the moral cases, I introduce, without further comment, the evaluative element in the prior impression, which is to say in the prior evaluation that forms the basis for one’s self-valuing. In providing these necessarily schematic illustrations I do nothing, of course, to reveal the extraordinary richness and complexity of analysis, the phenomenological detail, that Páll finds, and makes plain to the reader, in Hume’s deployment of his associationist schema.

Of course, moral evaluations – moral valuing of one’s self or of others – differ from the indirect passions to which they are analogous. Presumably they differ *qua* impressions. Crucially, they differ in being objective valuing. Their objectivity rests on their being products of what we may term corrected sympathy, where sympathy is to be understood not as itself a motive or emotion but as a psychological mechanism. Páll rightly points to the similarities Hume finds in the pressures towards objectivity both in perceptual experience and in feeling (and so, specifically, in moral feeling). As Hume himself surely, if surprisingly, does, Páll places the argumentative emphasis on the conditions on evaluative language rather than conditions on the evaluations themselves.

Within the associationist framework sketched above, and against the backdrop of his remarkably illuminating account of Hume on the roles of sympathy and its correction in the generation of objective – and so moral – evaluations of persons, Páll proceeds to characterize Hume’s central doctrines of both the natural and the artificial virtues. He offers *an* account of *Treatise* 3.2.1 (‘Justice, whether a natural or an artificial virtue?’) that is quite straightforward, an account not as strained and convoluted as those offered by Mackie or by Harrison. He offers a strikingly original suggestion for the interpretation of Hume’s intentions at *Treatise* 2.3.1-2 (‘Of liberty and necessity’), focusing on character, responsibility, and evaluative responses to persons. (I’ll return both to the artificiality of justice, and to liberty and necessity, below.) As many do, he takes Hume to be intent, at *Treatise* 3.1.1, on the refutation specifically of Rationalism in ethics, neglecting (as many do), Hume’s saying, at *Treatise* 3.1.1.26: ‘Nor does this reasoning only prove, that morality consists not in any relations, that are the objects of science; but if examin’d, will prove with equal certainty, that it 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’. (Páll offers an

extended defense of his reading of Hume as an anti-Rationalist in his introduction to the Fontana edition of Books II and III of the *Treatise* (1972), 9-17.)

In addition to forwarding the more general interpretive theses suggested thus far Páll provides exceptionally interesting renderings of two especially vexed and frequently cited passages from the *Treatise*. Why, in the famous passage about deriving ‘ought’ from ‘is’ does Hume say “Reason is, and *ought only to be* [my italics], the slave of the passions? Páll (PV 107) takes the italicized passage to be making a terminological recommendation, one that marks a distinction between criticizing an agent by attacking his character, thus expressing disapproval of the person, and criticizing a person for having a false belief. The same distinction is at work, Páll suggests, in the notorious passage stating that it is not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of one’s finger.

Given this too-quick sketch of what I take to be the most distinctive claims and lines of argumentation in *Passion and Value in Hume’s Treatise* Páll’s answer to the first question in my title, ‘Which Passions?’, appears to be: the objective counterparts to the four indirect passions of pride, humility, love, and hatred. In reply to my second question, ‘Which Values?’, it appears he would cite the several virtues Hume proceeds to characterize, including such virtues of character as justice, fidelity and chastity (amongst the artificial ones) and benevolence, generosity, and the like (amongst the so-called natural ones). Both answers are fine, so far as they go. But neither, I shall argue, goes far enough. It’s time to resist the teachings of my teacher.

4. Some caveats and qualifications are called for before we proceed. First, Páll does not purport to offer an account of the whole of Book II; there are many topics discussed therein, especially at T 2.3.4 *et seq.* that make no appearance – that need make no

appearance – in Páll’s account. Second, Páll explicitly claims not to be offering an account of the whole of Hume’s moral theory, and it will be obvious to the most casual reader that numerous topics touched on in Sections 2 and 3 of Book 3, including chastity and modesty, say, or political allegiance, need play no important role in the pursuit of Páll’s concerns. Páll’s is focused on Hume’s account of the nature of moral evaluations. It is this that leads to his detailed – and quite compelling – examination of the indirect passions, of the generation of their objective counterparts, and of the place of these objective counterparts in the evaluation both of natural and of artificial virtues. And even here there are hints of conscious circumscription, and of caution. In one of several such passages, Páll writes – judiciously, one might say – that one finds, when reflecting on what Hume writes about liberty and necessity, ‘a clear indication that the indirect passions have a special significance in the explanation of morals’ (PV92). To have a special significance is not, I take it, to have exclusive significance.

These caveats and qualifications registered, however, it is *quite* remarkable, I suggest, just what goes unsaid or unassimilated in Páll’s account of Hume’s emotionist account of moral evaluations as objective emotions. It’s not too surprising that Páll pays little attention to the direct passions of desire, aversion, joy, grief, hope, fear: they are neither person-directed nor person-implicating, and so not obviously tied to moral assessment. (It must be added, however, that *some* things said about the desires or aversions in question, and about those emotions that occur given the satisfaction or nonsatisfaction of such desires, have a role to play in Hume’s treatment of moral evaluation.). But it is unfortunate that, in considering Hume on liberty and necessity Páll views the discussion wholly through the lens of the indirect passions and, while attending to motivation, attends neither to its nature, nor to the vantagepoint of the agents motivated. And it is very unfortunate indeed that Páll wholly ignores *Treatise* 2.3.3 (‘Of

the influencing motives of the will'). Its central argument reappears as part of the larger argument of *Treatise* 3.1.1 ('Moral distinctions not deriv'd from reason') which in turn receives no close scrutiny or assessment. Here it's worth remarking that, as Páll puts it, 'none of the four indirect passions – pride, humility, love, hatred – is for Hume a motive' (PV126). (Compare: 'Although not, strictly speaking, themselves motives, these passions [love and hatred] are naturally attached to the motives of benevolence and anger'.) (PV82n). One is prompted to wonder about the place of *motivational* passions (including indirect ones) in Hume's emotionism

In effect what Páll fastens on are affective rather than conative states, on feelings or emotions (as one might more narrowly say) rather than on desires. His account of Hume's anti-rationalism (better: his anti-cognitivism) is, then, in several ways underdetermined; and his account of Hume's moral emotionism quite underdetermined as well. Páll's Humean agents are objects of evaluation (whether by themselves or by others) in virtue of their virtues and vices, and so, amongst other things, their motives. They are objective spectators, as it were, of their own conduct and character and of the conduct and character of others. But they play no developed role *as* moral agents, agents who, in their moral deliberations, reveal and deploy their values. Once one attends to the role of desires – including their objective counterparts – one sees that Hume's account of moral evaluation is a good deal more complex and inclusive than Páll's fastening on four indirect passions – the affective ones, at that - permits one to see. (Perhaps – I return to this below – one gets some help with Hume's notorious argument for the artificiality of justice, an argument that, as Páll represents it, makes a too-quick transition from needing an argument to securing a Humean conclusion.) I shall not argue here, though I do believe, that while saying so much about affective states Hume is committed to the *priority* of desire, the priority of the conative over the affective. What I do, more modestly, want to suggest is

that Páll's neglect of the conative constitutes a substantial textual and doctrinal lacuna in his masterful rendering of Books II and III of Hume *Treatise*. Hume's is a motivational as well as affective emotionism.

5. There's nothing remarkable in the suggestion that Hume thinks of action explanations in terms of desires and suitably related beliefs, or even in the suggestion that, for Hume, desires have a distinctive role in the generation of reasons for actions. Think of a scenario envisaged in the second *Enquiry*: 'Ask a man *why he uses exercise*; he will answer, *because he desires to keep his health*' (). Of course, he also believes that using exercise will have the desired effect. Think of another scenario: 'Ask a man *why he keeps his promise*; he will answer, *because he thinks he ought to fulfill his obligations*'. Or another. Why did he swim to the rescue? Because the struggling swimmer needed help. It seems a straightforward matter to set out an argument expressive, as one might say, of the several states – including the conative states, which is to say the desires, objective or not – that serve in the explanation of the actions in question.,

At *Treatise* 2.3.3 ('Of the influencing motives of the will') Hume constructs an argument designed to identify the role of desire in the generation of action. The paragraph in which the argument makes the first of two appearances has been described by Annette Baier (PS160,164,173) as 'a very silly paragraph that has perversely dominated the interpretation of his [Hume's] moral psychology', an 'unfortunate paragraph' in an 'unfortunately famous section of the *Treatise*'. Terence Penelhum is of like mind: this is 'one of Hume's worst arguments, and unfortunately one of his [Hume's] most important' (DH143). Whatever the merits of the argument in question – indeed, whatever the precise content of the argument – the argument is one Hume repeats at *Treatise* 3.1.1 ('Moral distinctions not deriv'd from reason'). It's clearly an argument Hume himself considers

important. It's not, however, an argument Páll considers in his exposition of Hume's emotionism. And it's clearly, or so I suggest, an argument focused on the role of desires in the generation of actions and so in action explanation. (Hume's illustration is the case of anger, an indirect passion to be sure, but more specifically a desire - a 'motivational passion' in Páll's words - in Hume's taxonomy.) Of course when the argument makes its second appearance the context is that of a wider argument concerning the nature of moral evaluations. Such moral evaluations are not matters of reason - they are not beliefs - and they are motivational. The point isn't, I take it, to argue that all moral evaluations are desires. While all evaluations are passions, some are non-motivational passions (the objective counterparts of the indirect passions of pride, humility, love, and hatred) and some are motivational passions (perhaps including objective counterparts of the indirect motivational passions of benevolence and anger - but surely including other motivational passions, other desires, as well.)

The repeated argument just considered forms part of a larger argument at *Treatise* 3.1.1, an argument emphasizing both the practicality of (some) moral judgments and the fact that these moral judgments play what may be called the major role in action explanations. Hume then assembles three sets of considerations in furtherance of his claims. To mention just the first, it is common practice to explain an agent's actions by citing his moral judgments: it is 'common experience...that men are often govern'd by their duties, and are deterr'd from some actions by the opinion of injustice, and impell'd to others by that of obligation' (T3.1.1.5). My point here is neither to elaborate nor to assess Hume's line of argumentation at *Treatise* 3.1.1 but to emphasize the centrality of 3.1.1 (which incorporates an earlier argument from T2.3.3) to a consideration of Hume's views about evaluations, to register the role it assigns to specifically moral desire - and to point out that it plays no role in Páll's own development of Hume's emotionism. My doing so

does nothing to undercut Páll's proper emphasis on the four indirect passions and their objective counterparts in his exposition of Hume's emotionism for the case of moral judgments. But it does suggest that that exposition is importantly incomplete.

6. Suppose all of this sound. How does – or how might – Hume represent the specifically moral desires in question? He would be committed to their phenomenological distinctness, of course, and to their objectivity. But what, as we might say, of their content? In a passage just cited, it seems the particular moral desires in question include thoughts of one's duties or obligations, or the thought of a course of action's being unjust. On the face of it, the full range of deontological and evaluative terms must find a place here. As also terms associated with the entire range of virtues of character. So, thoughts of the good and the bad, the worthwhile and the worthless, the virtuous and the vicious, as well as thoughts of what is obligatory, or one's duty, or right or wrong; and thoughts of what is just or beneficent, a matter of fidelity, or chaste or upright. To be sure, the virtues – many of them – are not just objects of, or bases for, objective affective evaluation. They are action-generating, motivational, themselves. But the point here suggested is that they are themselves valuational. To be just is to think it's being just a reason for performing an given action. To be just is to think an action's being just a reason for thinking one ought to act in the way in question, or to think oneself obligated to act in that way – and, thus motivated, to in fact act in the way in question. To be benevolent is to think an action's being beneficent a reason for performing that action, or to think that one ought to act that way.

Two related complications must be registered here. Páll writes: 'Hume thinks that the object of *moral* approval is always a quality of mind or character' (PV167). He goes on to remark; 'If I have been right in the emphasis I have placed upon the analogy between

approval and disapproval on the one hand, and the indirect passions on the other, one can understand why Hume should demand a close connection between the agent and the quality that *makes* us approve of him' (*ibid.*) Objective affective evaluations – those concerned with virtues of character - incorporate reference to motivational states in their content, as we might say. It's not the action itself, but the action as motivated, that is the basis of one's positive affective evaluation of the agent in question. There are many reasons to follow Páll – and Hume – along these lines. But what of objective *conative* evaluations. Must they meet a similar condition? The question is a vexing one and I must settle, now, for some modestly exploratory suggestions.

As I read what I call his 'Artificiality Argument', his argument for the artificiality of justice at *Treatise* 3.2.1, Hume *does* impose a like condition on objective conative as well as objective affective evaluations. In arguing that neither self-love, nor public benevolence, nor concern for 'the person concerned' provides a non-moral motive for justice, he is arguing not that there is no non-moral motive required, but that it must be a convention-presupposing one. (The non-moral motive in question is a convention-presupposing variant of 'selfishness and confin'd generosity', a concern for 'ourselves and our nearest friends' (T492).). The sense of moral obligation with respect to justice presupposes such a convention-based non-moral motive. Interestingly, Páll - while maintaining, as we noted above, that Hume's objective counterparts to the indirect passions (for the case of virtues of character) require reference to non-moral motives – makes no use of this condition when presenting his own account of Hume on the artificial virtues. *His* version of Hume's Artificiality Argument proceeds directly – which is to say, *not* via a condition on moral evaluation – to the convention-presupposing character of obligations of justice.

My objective here is not to press the merits of my own account of Hume's Artificiality Argument against those of Páll's. It's rather to introduce what seems to me a

striking feature of Hume's own reflections on the recognition of *conative* moral evaluations, a feature shared with his treatment of affective ones. The suggested account of the Artificiality Argument supports not just a surprising similarity (in Hume's mind) between conative and affective moral evaluations, but also a requirement of motive-implicating motivation, of motives that incorporate reference to motivational states. That's a very puzzling requirement, one that must, perhaps, be rejected.

A clearly related question is whether the envisaged Humean virtuous agent is, in virtue of the considerations about motivation just presented, motivated by a regard to virtue. Shall we say that the prospective agent's reason for repaying his debt is that that is what a just person would do, or that she acts with a view to acting from the motive from which a just person would act? David Wiggins takes such a commitment to be a mark of so-called virtue ethics, but one to be rejected as wrong. More satisfactory, in his view, is the suggestion that one focus on 'the purposes proper to virtue – the purposes themselves, not their connection to virtue' (E264n).

7. The first interrogative in my title is: Which Passions? While admiring Páll's articulation and analysis of Hume's treatment of a range of moral evaluations as objective counterparts to the indirect passions of pride, humility, love and hatred, I have attempted to show that Páll has neglected some centrally important parts of 'the two later books of the *Treatise*' and so has not come to grips with what Hume takes to be a range of moral evaluations analogous to desires.. The passions is question when Hume addresses the relation between passion and value in his *Treatise* include conative, not merely affective, ones.

My thoughts with respect to my second interrogative ('What Values?') are much less confidently formed, though they are informed by my answer to the first. Virtues, but not they alone, are Humean values. What a virtuous person values must be added to the

list. What a virtuous person views as right or good , or as just or beneficent – right actions or good results - are values as well.

How precisely to characterize *those* values is a question I have largely ignored. I have wholly ignored the question what (or what for Hume) *is* good or right, just or beneficent. I have *broached* the question whether the virtuous agent's virtuous actions are concerned with virtue and, following Wiggins, have suggested they have instead to do with 'the purposes proper to virtue – the purposes themselves, not their connection with virtue'. And I have suggested that there is reason to think that Hume himself took conative, and not just affective, moral evaluations to incorporate reference to motives which the agent takes to be virtuous.

My critical comments about lacunae and the like comport – to my mind – with a keen sense of the extraordinary virtues that Páll's *Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise* possess: its originality of thesis and elaboration; its textual and philosophical rigor; its philosophical, psychological, and historical acuity; the virtuosity of its case for Hume's emotionism. Rereading that book, and the many other of Páll's writings that complement it, has been, for me, a stimulating opportunity to engage once again – I hope constructively – with a philosopher who fired my own interest in Hume's philosophy of mind and morals and whom I think of as the exemplar of a deeply philosophical, textually attentive, commentator on the greatest of the major moral philosophers. Páll was, I suggest, a Humean himself. And, though he would have vigorously protested much of what I have come to make of Hume, he would – I'd like to think – applaud my continuing effort to learn from, but not just repeat, what he taught me – what he taught all of us – about the moral philosophy of 'the two later books of the *Treatise*'.