

# Good essay on humes criteria of virtue

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Philosophers customarily described virtue as the morally good habit such as honesty, honour and benevolence among others. Ethicists essentially failed to offer specific definition of the idea of virtue since the term often assumes controversial meanings in different situations. Hume is one of the renowned philosophers who have considerably developed the knowledge of the idea of virtues. Hume assumes a different perspective from the traditional view of the concept of virtue in reference to both the moral significance and the quantity of virtues. In his moral writings, Hume stretches the idea of virtues to include values such as wit, dialog and good manners. However, some philosophers have criticised Hume's work for making the idea of virtue irrelevant by broadening it. The paper reviews Hume's criteria of Virtue by evaluating his arguments from a critical viewpoint.

Hume's main approach in determining the virtue includes evaluating whether the action it presents is associated with the effect in which the spectator has compassionate feeling of moral pleasure. In essence, he assumes that specific well-defined feelings elicited in the spectator present two different classes. His take on the idea of virtue in this account clarified that precise feelings triggered by each virtue are also defined in a unique manner. In this view, he challenged the traditional accounts on the idea of virtues which categorized such elicited responses as feelings of moral approval. He believed that traditional approaches for defining and classifying virtues were devoid and vague. In consequence, he advocated for the adoption of a more diverse approach to the concept of the virtues.

Hume's take on virtue is that it is one of the causes of pride and humility. Virtue is a quality that can bring pain and pleasure to an individual. It is

made up of such qualities as courage, humility and justice, qualities that defend, bring support and exalts the individual. According to Hume, virtue is primarily caused by pleasure or is inseparable from it. He argues that pain causes virtue, and it is inseparable from it. In Hume's view, passion can be viewed as a virtue because it influences character or habit. Virtue being a cause for pride and/or humility becomes one of the qualities of the mind. He shows that this impression proceeds from an original quality and original mind qualities are given by nature. This means nature gives these qualities to the mind. The mind consequently begins to form secondary perceptions, thus determining the object of pride and humility. However, according to Hume, the causes of pride and humility are natural, but not original. He contends that vices and virtue result from the bad and good qualities of one's manners and actions, which determine the character of a person. Hume insisted that the difference between natural abilities and moral virtues is established because both categories of qualities prompt the same compassionate moral feeling in the spectator. However, he predicted protests, thus suggesting various possible points of difference between moral virtues and natural abilities. Hume was convinced that natural abilities are essentially uncontrolled while moral virtues are caused by the free will. He challenges the idea of classifying involuntary traits such as fortitude as virtues. Hume further accounts that there is no rational reason why an involuntary attribute of an agent may fail to cause a sympathetic pleasure in the spectator. This meant that the strategy for identifying and grouping virtues popularized by earlier philosophers was misinformed.

Hume also gives an account on the idea of modelling humanity's habits. In

this context, Hume argues that habits related to moral virtues can easily be modified through punishment and reward. In contrast, he states that habits related to natural abilities are stable, thus can hardly be changed through these means. In reference to this argument, Hume states that if human beings are not affected by such moral systems, then the identified distinction could hardly be found. Hume's account of how we go about making moral evaluations seems appropriate as he suggests that the mind's perceptions is made up impressions and ideas bringing about pains and pleasures of the body and passions. As it has been seen, virtue is one of the causes of these pains and pleasures. He shares that passions are either direct or indirect and observes under the indirect passions such aspects as pride and humility among others, which are caused by vices and virtues.

One might object to Hume's criteria of virtue by pointing out that virtue is not a cause, but a result of good actions or impressions developed by an individual. This is in view vice is not natural since it presents the consequences of bad actions taken by the individual. It could be pointed out that pride which in some quarters considered a vice is not excited by virtue. Furthermore, virtue such as humility cannot be excited by vice. These scenarios discredit Hume's criteria on the virtues especially the first account that define the concept of virtue in reference to the spectator's feeling of moral pleasure. Hume's criteria may also be criticized in the sense that there exist objections to his distinctions. For example, human beings have the potential of imagining things or situations that they have not perceived. The distinction between ideas and impressions is essential developing the concept of virtues. Impressions may be viewed as stunning and well defined

and are not likely to be mistaken, but ideas are obscure and can easily be confused with other ideas.

His response would be that virtue and vice produce real pleasure and pain in individuals whether from educational prejudices or self-interest. He argues that any impression with a tendency to ones prejudice or advantage gives uneasiness or a delight, and it is from this that approval or disapproval arises. He would retort to his observation that his understanding of pride is that it is the agreeable idea arising in mind, when made satisfied with oneself by the view of his beauty, riches, power or virtue while humility is the opposite idea. Hume argues that self or the intimate memory and consciousness of impressions and ideas that are related and in succession, is the object of impressions. This means that ideas of the mind create the object of pride and humility although these two are directly contrary. In essence, either of them can be felt when passions actuate individuals because they have the same object. Pride excites them while humility makes them dejected. Any other objects that may be grasped by the mind are considered with the view of “ self”. In this way, the idea of a virtue or vice has is irrelevant if the “ self” is not in consideration.