

Hume on the artificial virtues

Philosophy



**ASSIGN
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According to David Hume, “ if any action be either virtuous or vicious, tis only as a sign of some quality or character.” (Hume) The object of moral evaluation is a quality of mind, which in fact is a character trait. Hume’s evaluation and breakdown of an action stems from the breakdown of the inner quality we believe to have given rise to. For an action to be virtuous, it must make the individual practicing the action feel good. If an action is labeled as vicious, it must be an action that make the practicing individual feel bad.

In the “ A Treatise of Human Nature”, book 2, part 1, section 7, Hume states “ the very essence of virtue according to this hypothesis is to produce pleasure and that of vice, to give pain. The virtues and vices are character traits which produce approval and disapproval, regarding whomever contemplates or judges the trait. According to Hume, our moral evaluation of others character traits is born from our sentiments.

These sentiments are caused by scrutinizing the individual without regard to self-interest. Furthermore, a common or general perspective is drawn that nullifies certain deformities in the scrutinizer’s sympathies. This is explained more in depth by the “ General Point of View.” Approval represents a pleasure, where disapproval represents a pain. Moral sentiments are types of pleasures or pains that are correlated with passions, such as pride or diffidence. Thus, when we feel moral approval from others, we tend to have greater feelings toward the individuals evaluating us. We can characterize traits into two categories, virtuous and vicious. By the feelings of approval or disapproval directed at the trait.

Moral sentiments are formed by sympathy shared with others affected by an action. As we learn to delineate our moral sentiments, a resultant of our contemplation of other's traits, we can categorize them from the pleasure or discomfort we feel toward a trait of action. Sympathetic feelings in connection with our sentiments can differ in terms of effectiveness depending on the relationship between the observer and the person in which he sympathizes with. As many would agree, it is easier to sympathize with people who are alike in nature, or close to us geographically and spiritually.

The moral appraisals we fabricate do not change, in fact, they remain the same. To give a general explanation of how moral evaluations formulated by one individual alongside many others in a community tend to be similar. Hume declares that people do not fabricate their moral judgments from their own individual point of view, but instead choose "some common point of view, from which might cause it to appear the same to all of them." (T3. 3. 1. 30) Relative to natural virtues and vices, this general point of view is made up of perspectives of people who have a direct relationship or interaction with the individual being evaluated.

If an action is deemed virtuous, the individual practicing the action must receive a feeling of pleasure. If an action of trait is deemed vicious, the individual who possesses the trait or practices the action must receive a feeling of uneasiness or discomfort. Hume defends this by examining the origin of moral sentiments. Approval is seen as a pleasure, whereas disapproval is viewed as a pain. We can separate our traits into categories; virtuous and vicious, by the feelings on approval and disapproval toward

them. Whether or not the possessor feels a sense of pleasure or pain, distinguishes a virtuous action or trait from the vicious action or trait