

The Distinction between Reason and Intuitive Knowledge in Spinoza's *Ethics*

Sanem Soyarslan
Duke University

While both intuitive knowledge (*scientia intuitiva*) and reason (*ratio*) are adequate ways of knowing for Spinoza, they are not equal. Intuitive knowledge has greater power over the passive affects than reason, and appreciating the nature of this superiority is crucial to understanding Spinoza's ethical theory. However, due to Spinoza's notoriously parsimonious treatment of the distinction between reason and intuitive knowledge in the *Ethics*, there has been little consensus in the literature regarding the nature of this distinction. Instead, several candidate interpretations have emerged, which can be broadly grouped under two categories: Form Interpretations (FI) and Content Interpretations (CI).

According to the FI, which is held by scholars such as Yirmiyahu Yovel¹ and Steven Nadler², reason and intuitive knowledge are different only in terms of their form—that is, the process by which they are attained. Thus, the FI attributes the above epistemic asymmetry entirely to differences in the methods of cognition between intuitive knowledge and reason. By contrast, the CI, embraced by scholars such as Henry Allison³ and Edwin Curley⁴, holds that the two kinds of adequate knowledge differ not only in terms of their form, but also with regard to their content. More specifically, the CI maintains that reason involves the universal knowledge of the properties of things, whereas intuitive knowledge relates to the essence of things.

I agree with the CI that reason and intuitive knowledge differ not only in form but also with respect to their content. Nevertheless, I believe there is an important gap in the CI: namely, although it maintains that adequate knowledge of the *essences* of things is limited to intuitive knowledge, it fails to flesh out precisely what these essences are taken to be. I argue that we cannot adequately understand the role of intuitive knowledge in Spinoza's system without knowing what its object consists of. In this paper, I propose that intuitive knowledge is ultimately a superior form of self-knowledge, since its object is nothing but one's own unique actual essence—that is, one's own force of perseverance (*conatus*) following from/caused by the eternal necessity of God's nature. In other words, it is intuitive knowledge that provides us with the knowledge that “I am a part of this Nature,” that “my power is a part of God's power,” and that “my essence follows from His eternal and infinite essence.” Intuition thus reaches a strictly personal and particular level: namely, an adequate knowledge of one's own *conatus*. Reason, on the other hand, can only afford us with a limited understanding of singular things through their common properties, which “do not constitute the essence of any singular thing.”⁵ This difference in content makes intuitive knowledge the source of the highest blessedness and the culmination of human understanding, and hence a form of knowledge that is superior to reason.

¹ Yirmiyahu Yovel (1990) “The Third Kind of Knowledge as Alternative Salvation,” in *Spinoza. Issues and Directions. The Proceedings of the Chicago Spinoza Conference (1986)*, ed. Edwin Curley and Pierre-François Moreau, E.J. Brill, Leiden/New York/København/Köln, 157-175. See also Yovel (1991) *Spinoza and Other Heretics, Vol. I: The Marrano of Reason; Vol. II: The Adventures of Immanence*, Princeton University Press.

² Steven Nadler (2006), *Spinoza's Ethics: An Introduction*, Cambridge University Press.

³ Henry Allison (1987), *Benedict de Spinoza: An Introduction*, Yale University Press.

⁴ Edwin Curley (1973), “Experience in Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge,” in Marjorie Grene (ed.) *Spinoza: A Collection of Critical Essays*, University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame.

⁵ Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part II, Proposition 37: “What is common to all things and is equally in the part and in the whole does not constitute the essence of any singular thing.”

The Modernity of Descartes's Moral Theory

Joel Schickel
University of Dayton

According to Stephen Darwall, the 'modern conception of morality as a body of universal moral norms whose claim on us is fundamentally independent of that of our own good, indeed that can conflict with our good and bind us even so' arose partly in response to 'the skeptical challenge that Grotius considers – that there might be no reason to do what is right and just when this conflicts with the agent's own good'.⁶ One response to the kind of skeptical challenge that Darwall describes was offered by Thomas Hobbes. According to Hobbes, in the state of nature human beings have what he calls a 'right of nature' which is 'the liberty each man hath to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature, that is to say, of his own life'.⁷ The possibility of coming into conflict with others when we exercise this right of nature leads us to contract with others to limit the freedom we have by nature for the purpose of achieving a state of peace with other human beings.⁸

In this paper, I will explore the extent to which René Descartes's moral theory can be seen as a response to the sort of skeptical challenge that Grotius and Hobbes attempt to answer. On the one hand, Descartes appears to espouse a neo-Stoic conception of happiness as the highest good which is pursued through the development of virtue and the renunciation of the agent's claim to things that are not granted to her by providence (see *Passions*, art. 144-6, AT XI 436-40).⁹ On this view, the good of the human being is in concert with what is good for the cosmos as a whole, a position that Descartes seems to espouse in some of his later correspondence (see his letter to Princess Elizabeth, 15 September 1645, AT IV 293-5). On the other hand, Descartes' dualistic anthropology leads him to hold that the highest good for the body is the preservation of the mind-body union, which may at times run counter to the goal of pursuing what reason judges to be best for the soul. This segregation of what is in the interest of the body from what is in the interest of the soul is seen in art. 137-139 of Descartes's *Passions of the Soul*. Descartes suggests there that the passions of the soul have different roles to play insofar as they are related to the body and to the soul. The passions serve the body by preserving and strengthening thoughts that facilitate the preservation of the mind-body union. And because, like Hobbes, Descartes holds this pursuit to be for one's own advantage and to be prior to moral considerations, it could seem that many of our actions are motivated by self-interest. By contrast, the passions serve the soul by preserving and strengthening thoughts that facilitate the pursuit of its highest good, which is happiness. To serve these two different ends there are in fact two different orderings of the passions. In the former case, joy and sadness precede any judgments of value. The passions of the soul thus reinforce the judgment that painful things are bad and pleasant things are good, which aids the body in attaining self-preservation. In the latter case, the passions of joy and sadness are preceded by and follow from rational judgments of (moral) value, thus reinforcing

⁶ 'The Foundations of Morality' in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Donald Rutherford (Cambridge, 2006), p. 223.

⁷ *Leviathan*, pt. I, ch. 14, trans. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis, 1994), p. 79.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-1.

⁹ 'AT' refers to *Oeuvres de Descartes*, 12 vols., ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris, 1897-1913). Reprint, Paris: J. Vrin, 1957-68. The volume number is given in Roman numerals followed by the page numbers in Arabic numerals.

the soul's pursuit of things in proportion to their value in leading the agent towards virtue and happiness (AT XI 432).

As a result of this split between two kinds of highest good, there is a need in Descartes's moral theory to explain how it is that one's pursuit of self-preservation and one's pursuit of happiness are harmonized. Generosity serves this function by motivating the agent to prioritize the needs of the soul over those of the body, while not neglecting what is good for the body. This is seen in Descartes's discussion of anger. Generosity motivates us to hold in low regard anything that can be taken away from us and thereby prevents us from having excess anger in response to the offenses that we receive from others (*Passions*, art. 201-3, AT XI 479-81).

On the question of self-interest and moral law, Descartes's moral theory is an uneasy synthesis of the Classical and the Modern. Descartes resolves the skeptical challenge that Grotius considers by acknowledging the possibility of a divergence between self-interest and morality, but he nevertheless views moral judgments as trumping considerations of self-interest. In contrast to Hobbes, who views the creation of positive moral norms by self-interested human beings who are seeking to limit their vulnerability to the contingencies of a world where people are by nature at war with each other, Descartes thinks that reason requires that there is a highest good for the soul that is independent of self-preservation and in all cases we should prefer what is good for the soul to what is good for the body.

The Metaphysical Fact of Consciousness in Locke's Theory of Personal Identity

Shelley Weinberg
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Locke's theory of personal identity was philosophically groundbreaking for its attempt to establish a non-substantial identity condition. Locke states, "For the same consciousness being preserv'd, whether in the same or different Substances, the personal Identity is preserv'd" (II.xxvii.13).¹⁰ ¹¹ What exactly did Locke mean by the same consciousness? Many have interpreted Locke to think that consciousness identifies a self both synchronically and diachronically by attributing thoughts and actions to a self. Locke, therefore, is interpreted to have either a memory theory¹² or an appropriation theory of personal identity.¹³ The problems with these interpretations are ubiquitous in Locke scholarship. Memory theory interpretations are circular¹⁴, since they assume there is already an identical self to remember, and they fail the logic of transitivity.¹⁵ Appropriation theory interpretations are insufficient for Locke's moral theory insofar as he is committed to a theory of divine rectification. Since subjective appropriations of thoughts and actions are unreliable, God must have something objective to look

¹⁰ All references to John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 4th Edition, P.H. Nidditch, ed., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) are cited by book number.chapter number.section number.

¹¹ There are two good reasons why Locke would want a theory of this kind. First, relying on a psychological rather than a substantial condition allows Locke to remain agnostic on the nature of thinking substance. Having the same consciousness need not address the question whether thinking substance is material or immaterial. Second, at least by Locke's lights, the theory is compatible with his theological concerns. A psychological condition allows for some flexibility with regard to the theoretical particularities involved in Locke's theological commitments to the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. Moreover, both of these reasons are consistent with Locke's overall task in the *Essay* of outlining the limits of human understanding. He cannot have theoretical commitments either to the nature of thinking substance or to what might be involved in particular theological doctrines that go beyond what we can reasonably claim to know by our own investigations or by virtue of revelation. Thiel, "Personal Identity", especially pp. 870-871, and Ayers, *Locke*, II: 205 discuss these issues. See also Edwin McCann, "Locke on Identity: Matter, Life, and Consciousness", *Archive fur Geschichte der Philosophie*, 69 (1987), p. 68, who cites as another reason Locke's desire to provide a theory that is compatible with Christian doctrine but does not also appeal to substantial forms. Says McCann, "If Locke can account for the identity of persons without calling upon any immaterial principles of unity—souls, substantial forms—then he will have snatched the best case away from the Scholastics".

¹² See Anthony Flew, "Locke on Personal Identity", in ed. C. B. Martin and D. M. Armstrong, (New York: Anchor Books, 1968), John Perry ed., *Personal Identity*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1975). On a memory theory I am identical to a past self if I can be linked by a memory of the past self.

¹³ Those attributing to Locke the view that the central issue concerns the subjective constitution of the self by means of consciousness of past thoughts and actions include J. L. Mackie, *Problems From Locke*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 183; David Behan, "Locke on Persons and Personal Identity" in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. ix, no. 1, March 1979, pp. 53-75; Winkler, "Locke on Personal Identity", in ed. V. Chappell, *Locke*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 153f; Edwin Curley, "Leibniz and Locke on Personal Identity" in ed. M. Hooker, *Leibniz: Critical and Interpretive Essays*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 310.

¹⁴ Joseph Butler, *The Works of Joseph Butler*, ed. W. E. Gladstone, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1896), I: 385, states, "that consciousness of personal identity presupposes, and therefore cannot constitute, personal identity; any more than knowledge, in any other case, can constitute truth, which it presupposes".

¹⁵ See Bishop George Berkeley, *Alciphron* in *The Works of George Berkeley*, ed. T. E. Jessop and A. A. Luce, 9 Vols., (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1948-57), 3: 299 and Thomas Reid's formulation in *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, ed. Derek Brookes, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), p. 276. I mention the case for historical interest. The problem is easily solved by attributing to Locke an ancestral memory theory of personal identity: I am identical to any past self that is remember by an ancestor self that I remember.

to in determining our eternal rewards.¹⁶ The common problem is that Locke's theory seems to demand an objective, or metaphysical, fact of a continuing consciousness that does not appeal to substance, but interpretations are at a loss to find one.^{17 18}

Perhaps it's time to try something new. Some have argued that consciousness, for Locke is best understood as self-consciousness, namely the awareness that *I am perceiving* constituent of any ordinary perception.¹⁹ In II.xxvii of the *Essay*, however, we see an ambiguity in Locke's use of the term 'consciousness'. Locke seems to see consciousness as both the state internal to an act of perception by means of which we are aware of ourselves as perceiving and as the ongoing self we are aware of in these conscious states. The first sense of consciousness is a momentary psychological state of myself as perceiving, say, past and present ideas. The second sense of consciousness is the objective fact of an ongoing consciousness. In this paper, I will make the textual argument why we should read Locke as having a conception of a metaphysical fact of a continuing consciousness that does not appeal to substance to establish its continuity. That is, consciousness is something that endures through our momentary conscious states of ourselves even if the full duration of a continuing consciousness is known only by God. Therefore, the metaphysical fact of consciousness is philosophically distinguished from the phenomenological fact of my experience of it. Although the text bears out that Locke seemed to think there is a fact of an ongoing consciousness, I will argue that it is consistent with his reluctance elsewhere that he makes no further epistemological or ontological claims about it. I will also reconcile the interpretation with seemingly conflicting passages concerning the relation of consciousness to memory.

¹⁶ The problem is that we are not always aware of all we have done, and it's possible we can falsely attribute to ourselves things we haven't done as happens in false memory. Behan, "Locke on Persons and Personal Identity", pp.74-5, Flew, "Locke and the Problem of Personal Identity", p. 164, and Winkler, "Locke on Personal Identity", p. 168-72, specifically point to the deficiency of Locke's theory in this regard.

¹⁷ Thus, Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, P. Remnant and J, Bennett, trans. and eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 236, even though sympathetic to the claim that consciousness is a necessary condition for personal identity, argued that it was not enough. Leibniz insisted on the necessity of a substantial "real identity" underlying the phenomenal states we subjectively experience. See Curley, "Locke and Leibniz on Identity", pp. 302-26, for an interesting comparison of Locke to Leibniz on this issue.

¹⁸ The only exception I have found is Gideon Yaffe, "Locke on Ideas of Identity and Diversity", in ed. L. Newman, *The Cambridge Companion to Locke's Essay*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 226, who argues that we should attribute to Locke "the susceptibility-to-punishment theory of personal identity" in which the moral fact of identity takes priority over the metaphysical fact.

¹⁹ See Uriah Kriegel and Angela Coventry, "Locke on Consciousness", *History of Philosophy Quarterly* (2008) 25:3, 221-42 and Shelley Weinberg, "The Coherence of Consciousness in Locke's *Essay*", *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, (2008) 25:1, 21-40.

Psychologism, Sensibilism, and Kant's Debt to Hume

Brian Chance
University of Oklahoma

There is a familiar story about Kant's relationship to Hume. According to it, Hume's account of causation presented Kant with a challenge. Hume denied the *a priori* origin of the concept of cause and so the *a priori* justification of all causal judgments. And Kant responded to a generalized version of these denials in the Metaphysical and Transcendental Deductions of the first *Critique* by determining the number and establishing the objective validity of the pure concepts of the understanding. The familiar story thus makes Hume's philosophy into a cautionary tale for Kant, one whose main service to was demonstrate the urgency of providing the arguments of the Transcendental Analytic and whose moral is that the use of exclusively empirical principles to explain human cognition leads invariably to skepticism. Aspects of this story are as old as the *Critique* itself.²⁰ It was promulgated by the first generation of German philosophers writing in Kant's wake.²¹ And it quickly found its way into historical treatments of philosophy in the second half of the eighteenth-century.²²

But there is also a second story, not nearly as familiar but equally old and equally important. According to it, Kant and Hume have much more in common than their well-known disagreement over the status of causal judgments would suggest. Each is critical of rationalist attempts to cognize supersensible objects such as God and the soul, and each develops his account of cognition, in part, to demonstrate the futility of these attempts. J. G. Hamann recognized this affinity with Hume in 1781 when he wrote to Herder that Kant's critique of speculative theology had earned him the title of a 'Prussian Hume'.²³ And nearly two hundred years later, it was Hamann's comment that inspired Lewis White Beck to argue that Hume might well be thought of as a 'Scottish Kant'.²⁴ More recently, Manfred Kuehn, Gary Hatfield, and

²⁰ See A856/B884. Kant also endorses the main lines of this story at 4:260-1.

²¹ See, for example, K. L. Reinhold, *Ueber das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens* (Jena: Johann Michael Mauke, 1791) and G. E. Schulze, *Aenesidemus oder über die Fundamente der von dem Herrn Professor Reinhold in Jena gelieferten Elementarphilosophie* (Helmstädt, 1792). For discussion of these and other works by philosophers of this generation, see Karl Ameriks, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Frederick Beiser *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 226–323.

²² See, for example, F. C. Stäudlin, *Geschichte und Geist des Skeptizismus*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Siegfried Lebrecht Crusius, 1794), pp. 283-96; W. G. L. Eberstein, *Versuch einer Geschichte der Logik und Metaphysik bei den Deutschen*, vol. 2 (Halle: Johann Gottfried Ruff, 1799), pp. 50–3; Kuno Fischer, *Immanuel Kant: Entwicklungsgeschichte und System der kritischen Philosophie* (Mannheim: Friedrich Zasserman, 1860), pp. 30–9; and Hans Vaihinger, *Commentar zu Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Spemann, 1881), pp. 3–11.

²³ See Johann Georg Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, ed. W. Ziesemer and A. Henkel, 7 volumes (Wiesbaden: Insel Verlag, 1955), 4:293, 298, and 343. Hamann's comments actually predate the publication of the *Critique*. He was able to make them because he had obtained advance copies of the signatures of the *Critique* from Kant's publisher, Hartknoch. The first 30 signatures arrived on April 4, 1781, followed by an additional 18 on April 14, and the remaining signatures, including the Preface and the last 87 pages of the Doctrine of Method, arrived at the beginning of June. See Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, 4:278, 289, and 305.

²⁴ Lewis White Beck, 'A Prussian Hume and a Scottish Kant,' in *Essays on Kant and Hume* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 111–29 at p. 112.

Eric Watkins have each expanded on Hamann's suggestion, arguing that Kant viewed Hume's philosophy as a forerunner to his own critique of metaphysics.²⁵

One story thus emphasizes Kant's differences with Hume and recognizes few if any affinities, while the other recognizes deep affinities and insists that they are at least as important as the differences. In this paper, I shall defend a version of the second story. But I begin by raising doubts about the most recent and radical version of it, articulated by Wayne Waxman.²⁶ Like Hamann and others, Waxman emphasizes that demonstrating the limitations of rationalist accounts of cognition (including rationalist views about cognition of supersensible objects) is important to both Kant and Hume. But on his view, the affinities between Kant and Hume run even deeper. For it is only Hume's failure to consider the possibility of *a priori* sensible intuition that Waxman believes kept Hume from developing two views we today regard as quintessentially Kantian: transcendental idealism and a synthetic *a priori* account of causal and mathematical judgments.²⁷ Thus, on Waxman's view, it is Kant's use of the *a priori* intuitions of space and time in his account of cognition that has created the illusion of radical discontinuity between Kant and Hume where there is in fact great and hitherto unnoticed continuity.

To be sure, Kant's affinities with Hume have been neglected. But I believe Waxman's reading of them should be resisted. As I discuss in section one, this reading relies crucially on claims about Hume's influence on Kant and, conversely, Kant's debt to Hume. But Waxman's account of this influence is, I believe, difficult (if not impossible) to reconcile with many of the central views Kant wants to defend in the *Critique*. In section two, I discuss these views and the difficulties with reconciling them with Waxman's claim that the core of Kant's debt to Hume lies in his adoption of what Waxman calls *sensibilism* and *psychologism*.

Despite the difficulties with Waxman's view, we should not ignore the numerous passages in which Kant credits Hume with having both anticipated and influenced his views in the *Critique*. And in section three, I introduce my own, more modest proposal regarding Kant's debt to Hume. In section four, I then conclude with some remarks about why this debt is the modest one I have described. As I hope to show in these last two sections, Kant credited Hume with being the first to argue that an analysis of the mind and the sources of its representations can yield strong arguments against rationalist claims to cognition of supersensible objects and regarded this analysis as important (albeit a fundamentally flawed) forerunner of his arguments in the *Critique*.

²⁵ See Manfred Kuehn, 'Kant's Conception of Hume's Problem,' *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 21 (1983), 175-93; 'Kant's Transcendental Deduction: A Limited Defense of Hume,' in B. Ouden and M. Moen (eds.), *New essays on Kant* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), pp. 47-72; Gary Hatfield, 'The Prolegomena and the Critiques of Pure Reason,' in R. P. Horstmann V. Gerhardt, and R. Schumacher (eds.), *Kant und die Berliner Aufklärung* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), pp.185-208; 'What Were Kant's Aims in the Deduction?' *Philosophical Topics*, 31 (2003), pp. 165-98; and Eric Watkins, *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 374-81. Kuehn also provides a useful summary of his view in *Kant: A Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 250-69.

²⁶ See Wayne Waxman, *Kant and the Empiricists: Understanding Understanding* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Waxman elaborates on aspects of these views in 'Kant's Humean Solution to Hume's Problem,' in D. Garber and B. Longuenesse (eds.), *Kant and the Early Moderns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 179-92.

²⁷ See Waxman, *Kant and the Empiricists*, pp. 18-21, pp. 37-9 and 'Kant's Humean Solution,' p. 174.

“Where men judge of things by their natural, unprejudiced reason”: Hume and His Contemporaries on the Virtues

**Colin Heydt
University of South Florida**

It was a commonplace in eighteenth century British moral philosophy that though there may have been strenuous disagreement concerning the “theory of morals,” which addressed the grounds for and nature of morality, almost everyone agreed concerning “practical ethics,” which included the main content of morality. To simplify: philosophers concurred about *what* we ought to do and be, but not about *why*.

It turned out, however, that Hume was in this, as in many other things, an exception. His account of the nature and catalogue of the virtues elicited very strong criticisms. I argue that attention to these criticisms and to the standard picture of the virtues that Hume attacked illuminates both Hume’s moral philosophy and the character of eighteenth century moral philosophy as a whole.

This paper is organized around two well-known claims that Hume makes about his account of the virtues—claims that we often consider to be unproblematic but that his contemporaries thought were wrong.

The first claim comes in a letter to Hutcheson during the composition of the *Treatise*. Hume observes that “Upon the whole, I desire to take my catalogue of Virtues from Cicero’s *Offices*, not from the *Whole Duty of Man*. I had, indeed, the former Book in my Eye in all my Reasonings.”

Now, it is undoubtedly true that Hume favors *De Officiis* over the famous seventeenth century Anglican work of practical divinity. But for Hume’s philosophical contemporaries, Hume was still too far away from Cicero, and this distance revealed something deeply wrong about Hume’s treatment of the nature of the virtues. Most importantly, by identifying the virtues as qualities agreeable or useful to oneself or others, Hume rejected (so his critics thought) the link between virtue and *honestas* (honorableness), and thereby declared himself an Epicurean (and a moral sceptic) rather than a Ciceronian. This meant that Hume essentially failed to appreciate the nature of morality, which helped to explain his inability to distinguish between truly moral qualities like justice and merely amiable qualities like wit.

The second well-known claim comes in the *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* after Hume divides the main content of morality—the constituents of “personal merit”—into those qualities agreeable to ourselves or others. He argues that no other virtues will ever be allowed “where men judge of things by their natural, unprejudiced reason, without the delusive glosses of superstition and false religion.” For all of Hume’s matter-of-factness, however, his enumeration of the virtues was both highly unusual and polemical.

According to his contemporaries, whose views on the virtues I discuss, Hume’s list of the virtues was both too inclusive and too exclusive. It included qualities that were simply not virtues (e.g. cleanliness). And to the great consternation of people like Reid and Price, Hume’s list not only omitted “monkish virtues”—it also left out piety. In so doing, Hume had essentially grouped many of his philosophical colleagues, who styled themselves enemies of religious superstition

and enthusiasm, with the conservative Presbyterians and Methodists they opposed. Everyone caught this implication of Hume's catalogue of virtues (though present-day writers on Hume miss it), and it represented an attack both on the standard lists of the virtues and on the popular compromise that most moral philosophers of the century had reached with religion.

I conclude by arguing that close, contextual attention to Hume's taxonomy of the virtues reveals essential information about Hume's moral philosophy and its relation to eighteenth century thought. First, his account of the virtues indicates how he identifies with Epicurean moral thought and rejects the Christian Stoicism that dominated most moral philosophy in the period. Second, his list of the virtues represents a knowing rejection of the natural law practical ethics taught in almost every university and academy in Britain. Without appreciating these two major points about how Hume situates his writing against that of his contemporaries, it is *impossible* for us to understand what Hume is trying to do in his moral philosophy, which often, in turn, compromises our ability to comprehend his particular arguments about morals.

Good Sense, Art, and Morality in Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste"

Reed Winegar
University of Pennsylvania

In his only major foray into aesthetics, the essay "Of the Standard of Taste," David Hume writes:

[W]here vicious manners are described, without being marked with the proper characters of blame and disapprobation, this must be allowed to disfigure the poem, and to be a real deformity. I cannot, nor is it proper I should, enter into such sentiments; and...I can never relish the composition.²⁸

This brief, though striking, passage has recently attracted much attention from philosophers interested in the relationship between morality and art. More specifically, Hume's remark has served as a springboard for two prominent debates in the recent aesthetics literature. First, philosophers such as Noël Carroll and Berys Gaut have presented influential arguments for *moralism* (i.e., the thesis that any artwork which presents a morally flawed outlook is to some extent aesthetically flawed as a result) inspired by Hume's passage.²⁹ Second, philosophers such as Kendall Walton and Richard Moran have characterized this same passage as the first to acknowledge a particular phenomenon that aestheticians recently have been at pains to explain—namely, the phenomenon of *imaginative resistance* (i.e., the fact that readers often refuse to "play along" when authors describe fictional scenarios where, for example, murder is valorous).³⁰

However, while Hume's essay has played an important role *inspiring* the current discussions of moralism and imaginative resistance, Hume's *own* arguments here have confused and puzzled commentators. In fact, Hume's own position routinely has been criticized as *incoherent*. To begin, as various commentators have noted, Hume's moralism appears to *contradict* his own pronouncement earlier in "Of the Standard of the Taste" that true judges of artworks (whose joint opinion constitutes the true standard of taste) must view artworks from the perspectives of their intended audiences and, thus, be free of prejudice.³¹ And yet, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* (which Hume admits suffer aesthetically from Homer's morally flawed outlook) obviously were intended for an audience that shared Homer's ancient values. How, then, can Hume argue for moralism without contradicting his own freedom from prejudice requirement? And commentators also have dismissed Hume's own attitude towards imaginative resistance as contradictory. Richard Moran, for instance, has claimed that Hume's argument ultimately appears to rely on the contradictory claim that our moral sentiments are both highly resistant to change and extremely fragile.

In this essay, I defend the coherence of Hume's position against these two objections. Specifically, I argue that *both* criticisms fail to appreciate the role that Hume's aesthetic theory

²⁸ David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," in *Selected Essays*, edited by Stephen Copley and Andrew Edgar, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pg. 152.

²⁹ See Noël Carroll, "Moderate Moralism," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 36 (1996), pp. 223-238 and Berys Gaut, *Art, Emotion, and Ethics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

³⁰ See Kendall Walton, "Morals in Fiction and Fictional Morality," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 68 (1994), pp. 27-50 and Richard Moran, "The Expression of Feeling in Imagination," *The Philosophical Review* 103 (1994), pp. 75-106.

³¹ See especially Christopher MacLachlan, "Hume and the Standard of Taste," *Hume Studies* XII (1986), pp. 18-38.

assigns to the faculty of “good sense.”³² Hume explicitly claims that true judges must possess good sense, and Peter Kivy previously has argued that Hume’s emphasis on good sense signifies an important departure from the earlier aesthetics of Francis Hutcheson.³³ However, there has been no attempt to extend Hume’s view of good sense specifically to his discussion of the relationship between art and morality, despite the existence of strong textual evidence for such an extension.

In fact, by referring to the role that good sense plays in Hume’s theory, we will be able to see (contrary to the popular suggestion of Moran and others) that Hume’s argument does *not* rely on the thesis that our moral sentiments are exceptionally fragile—a thesis that, as I will further argue, Hume actually *rejects* in “The Sceptic.” Hume, thus, avoids Moran’s charge of incoherence. Additionally, the alleged tension between Hume’s moralism and his own freedom from prejudice requirement can be resolved once we recognize that Hume’s freedom from prejudice requirement and his moralism are both governed by a more general theory of good sense, or so I will argue. And, finally, we will see that, when properly construed in terms of good sense, Hume’s argument not only anticipates many of Carroll and Gaut’s best points in favor of moralism but also avoids a major objection to Carroll and Gaut’s own arguments—namely, that their arguments show not that artworks with morally depraved outlooks possess diminished aesthetic value but merely that the aesthetic value of such artworks is simply *inaccessible* to morally upright audiences.

Of course, emphasizing the role that good sense plays in Hume’s theory does not only provide Hume with a more interesting argument. It also illustrates the importance that further research on Hume’s aesthetics should place on Hume’s theory of good sense, especially (as I will conclude by discussing) when examining the analogies and disanalogies between Hume’s own aesthetic and moral theories.

³² Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste,” pg. 142

³³ Peter Kivy, “Hume’s Neighbour’s Wife: An Essay on the Evolution of Hume’s Aesthetics,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 23 (1983), pp. 195-208