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Hume's Alleged Success over Hutcheson

Abstract

David Hume thinks that human affections are naturally partial, while Francis Hutcheson holds that humans originally have disinterested benevolence. Michael Gill argues that Hume's moral theory succeeds over Hutcheson's because the former severs the link between explaining and justifying morality. According to Gill, Hutcheson is wrong to assume that our original nature should be the basis of morality. Gill's understanding of Hutcheson's theory does not fully represent it, since for Hutcheson self-love and self-interest under certain conditions are permissible, or even desirable or necessary for the good of society. There is not much difference between Hutcheson's and Hume's theories in the sense that they both extract impartial morality from human character as it is. Hume's theory does not succeed over Hutcheson's because Hume does not propose a better way of extracting morality nor explain all moral phenomena.

Key words

Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Michael B. Gill, ethics, human nature, impartiality, benevolence, partiality, self-interest, self-love

Introduction

David Hume thinks that human affections are naturally partial, while Francis Hutcheson holds that humans originally have disinterested benevolence. Michael Gill argues that Hume's moral theory succeeds over Hutcheson's because the former severs the link between explaining and justifying morality. According to Gill, Hutcheson is wrong to assume that our original nature should be the basis of morality. I first argue that Gill's understanding of Hutcheson's theory does not fully represent it, since for Hutcheson self-love and self-interest under certain conditions are permissible, or even desirable or necessary for the good of society. I then point out that there is not much difference between Hutcheson's and Hume's theories in the sense that they both extract impartial morality from human character as it is. Finally, I show that Hume's theory does not succeed over Hutcheson's because Hume does not propose a better way of extracting morality nor explain all moral phenomena.

Hutcheson's account of natural disinterested benevolence in humans

Hutcheson holds that we originally have "*benevolent Affections...*toward others, in various Degrees, making us desire their Happiness as an *ultimate*

End, without any view to private Happiness.”¹ He remarks, “*Desire of the Happiness of others which we account virtuous, is not directly excited by prospects of any secular Advantage, Wealth, Power, Pleasure of the external Senses, Reward from the Deity, or future Pleasures of Self-Approbation.*”² Hutcheson considers “disinterested Affection” to be an “Instinct, antecedent to all Reason from Interest.”³ Hutcheson mentions evidence for natural disinterested benevolence in humans: the fact that dying people wish the happiness of others. Since they know that they will perish soon, Hutcheson thinks that they wish others’ happiness not for their own pleasure. He writes,

“Should any alledge, that this Desire of the Happiness of others, after our Exit, is from some *confused Association of Ideas*; as a Miser, who loves no body, might desire an Increase of Wealth at his Death; or as any one may have an Aversion to have his Body dissected, or made a Prey to Dogs after Death: let any honest Heart try if the deepest Reflection will break this *Association* (if there be any) which is supposed to raise the Desire. The closest Reflection would be found rather to strengthen it...’Tis plain then we feel this *ultimate Desire* of the Happiness of others to be a most *natural Instinct*, which we also expect in others, and not the Effect of any confused Ideas.”⁴

Thus, Hutcheson rejects the idea that “this Desire of the Happiness of others, after our Exit, is from some *confused Association of Ideas*.” Since deep reflection does not break the association, he thinks that the desire for others’ happiness is our natural disposition.

In ethics, Hutcheson opposes moral rationalism. He thinks that moral distinctions are based on “the *Moral Sense*, by which ‘we perceive *Virtue*, or *Vice* in our selves, or others.’”⁵

Hutcheson objects to philosophers like Thomas Hobbes and Bernard Mandeville who think that morality can be reduced to self-love or self-interest. Hutcheson writes,

“Suppose we reap the same Advantage from two Men, one of whom serves us from Delight in our Happiness, and Love toward us; the other from Views of Self-Interest, or by Constraint: both are in this Case equally beneficial or advantageous to us, and yet we shall have quite different Sentiments of them.”⁶

Hutcheson considers “the universal Foundation of our Sense of moral Good, or Evil” to be “Benevolence toward others on one hand, and Malice, or even Indolence, and Unconcernedness about the apparent publick Evil on the other.”⁷ He says,

“The affections which excite this moral approbation are all either directly benevolent, or naturally connected with such dispositions; those which are disapproved and condemned, are either ill-natured, by which one is inclined to occasion misery to others; or such selfish dispositions as argue some unkind affection, or the want of that degree of the benevolent affections which is requisite for the publick good, and commonly expected in our species” (SMP I.2.V).⁸

Hutcheson also remarks, “the most useful Action imaginable, loses all appearance of Benevolence, as soon as we discern that it only flowed from Self-Love or Interest.”⁹ According to him, “[t]he Actions which flow solely from Self-Love, and yet evidence no Want of Benevolence, having no hurtful Effects upon others, seem perfectly indifferent in a moral Sense.”¹⁰ In Hutcheson’s view, what is morally important is not an action itself but benevolence in the action.¹¹

Hume’s account of natural partiality in humans

Like Hutcheson, Hume claims that moral distinctions are derived not from reason but from a moral sense. He holds “that moral distinctions depend en-

tirely on certain peculiar sentiments of pain and pleasure, and that whatever mental quality in ourselves or others gives us a satisfaction, by the survey or reflection, is of course virtuous; as every thing of this nature, that gives uneasiness, is vicious” (T 3.3.1.3).¹²

Hume thinks that humans naturally have “partiality” and “unequal affection”. He remarks, “it appears, that in the original frame of our mind, our strongest attention is confin’d to ourselves; our next is extended to our relations and acquaintance; and ’tis only the weakest which reaches to strangers and indifferent persons” (T 3.2.2.8). Hume calls this characteristic “*selfishness and limited generosity*” (T 3.2.2.16) too. According to him, our sympathy is also naturally partial. “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. 3.3.1.14).

Hume thinks that since human affections are naturally partial, it is impossible to correct errors in our moral judgments by appealing to our original nature. This is clear from his following statements:

“In vain shou’d we expect to find, in *uncultivated nature*, a remedy to this inconvenience; or hope for any inartificial principle of the human mind, which might controul those partial affections, and make us overcome the temptations arising from our circumstances. . . [O]ur natural uncultivated ideas of morality, instead of providing a remedy for the partiality of our affections, do rather conform themselves to that partiality, and give it an additional force and influence” (T 3.2.2.8).

Hume does not intend to argue for partiality in morality. In his view, for stable and impartial moral judgment, “we fix on some *steady and general* points of view” (T 3.3.1.15). One must “depart from his private and particular situation, and must choose a point of view, common to him with others” (EPM 9.6).¹³ Hume says,

1 Francis Hutcheson, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, ed. Aaron Garrett (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2002), 136.

2 Ibid., 24–25.

3 Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, in Two Treatises*, ed. Wolfgang Leidhold, rev. ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2008), 112.

4 Hutcheson, *Essay*, 28.

5 Ibid., 17. Before Hutcheson, the third Earl of Shaftesbury employed the term ‘moral sense’ in writing. Hutcheson borrows the term from him. See Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 3 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001), 2:27.

6 Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 90.

7 Ibid., 120.

8 Francis Hutcheson, *A System of Moral Philosophy, in Three Books*, 2 vols. (London: A. Millar and T. Longman, 1755). The “1.2.V” refers to book 1, chapter 2, section 5.

9 Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 103.

10 Ibid., 122.

11 Most of Hutcheson’s ideas introduced in this section also appear in Noriaki Iwasa, “Sentimentalism and Metaphysical Beliefs”, *Prolegomena* 9, no. 2 (2010), 272–274.

12 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). The “3.3.1.3” refers to book 3, part 3, section 1, paragraph 3.

13 David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp, crit. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). The “9.6” refers to section 9, paragraph 6.

“Tis therefore from the influence of characters and qualities, upon those who have an intercourse with any person, that we blame or praise him. We consider not whether the persons, affected by the qualities, be our acquaintance or strangers, countrymen or foreigners. Nay, we over-look our own interest in those general judgments; and blame not a man for opposing us in any of our pretensions, when his own interest is particularly concern'd” (T 3.3.1.17).

Hume also remarks,

“Sympathy... is much fainter than our concern for ourselves, and sympathy with persons remote from us, much fainter than that with persons near and contiguous; but for this very reason, it is necessary for us, in our calm judgments and discourse concerning the characters of men, to neglect all these differences, and render our sentiments more public and social.”

As these passages show, impartial moral judgment is possible if we judge “without regard to self, or the persons with whom we are more intimately connected” (EPM 5.42; cf. T 3.3.3.2). In this way, we carry our moral approval “into the most distant countries and ages, and much beyond our own interest” (T 3.3.1.9).

Gill's claim

According to Michael Gill, most ethics in our time hold that “explaining morality and justifying it are two different tasks.” Yet in theological ethics, “the difference between explaining something in terms of God's intentions and justifying it can easily be obscured.” Hutcheson's moral theory has its place between these two types. Gill argues that Hume's moral theory succeeds over Hutcheson's because the former severs the link between explaining and justifying morality.¹⁴ Gill writes,

“while Hutcheson aims to show that impartial benevolence and approval are original to human nature, Hume argues that our original sentiments are extremely partial and that moral impartiality develops only as a result of association and convention. Hume's explanations are not intended to establish, of course, that we ought to abandon moral impartiality. What they establish, rather, is that Hutcheson was wrong to think that our original pre-associative constitution sets the standard of how we ought to live.”¹⁵

We need to keep in mind the opposite roles association of ideas play in Hutcheson's and Hume's theories. According to Gill, “while Hutcheson emphasizes the ways in which association corrupts our original impartial moral sense, Hume argues that association produces much of the moral impartiality we evidence.”¹⁶ How does Hume explain that association produces impartiality in us who naturally have partial affections? Gill writes,

“He does so, first, by pointing out that unjust acts generally cause more harm than good. This fact, he continues, coupled with our sympathetically grounded disposition to disapprove of that which harms others, leads us to disapprove of unjust acts that do not affect our own interests. But if we have represented to us enough harmful acts of injustice that do not affect our own interests, and if (as we must) we feel disapproval in most of these cases, we will eventually develop the associative habit of conjoining disapproval and injustice. And once this habit develops, we will tend to feel disapproval toward all unjust acts, even those that benefit us.”¹⁷

On the other hand, in Hutcheson's view, although we originally have disinterested benevolence, associations of ideas deprave our moral sense and produce partiality. He says, “the Sense of particular Persons is often depraved by *Custom, Habits, false Opinions, Company*.”¹⁸ Hutcheson also mentions that the following causes distort our moral sense: First, “Different Opinions of Happiness, or natural Good, and of the most effectual Means to advance it.”¹⁹ Second, “the Diversity of Systems, to which Men, from foolish Opinions,

confine their Benevolence.”²⁰ Third, “the false Opinions of the Will or Laws of the Deity.”²¹

Disinterested benevolence and self-love in Hutcheson's theory

As we saw, Hume thinks that human affections are naturally partial, while Hutcheson holds that humans originally have disinterested benevolence. These are their views on original human nature. But Hutcheson admits that self-love and self-interest also motivate our actions.²² In appearance, disinterested benevolence seems incompatible with self-love and self-interest. In fact, Hutcheson says, “As to the Love of Benevolence, the very Name excludes Self-Interest.”²³ Considering that for him benevolence is the universal foundation for morality, what is the role of self-love and self-interest in his theory? Hutcheson does not exclude them from his theory.

Hutcheson points out the possibility that both benevolence and self-love may motivate a same action simultaneously. He says, “if the Agent have both *Self-Love* and *publick Affections*, he acts according to that Affection which is *strongest*, when there is any *Opposition* of Interests; if there be no *Opposition*, he follows both.”²⁴ Hutcheson also says, “as all Men have *Self-Love*, as well as *Benevolence*, these two Principles may jointly excite a Man to the same Action; and then they are to be consider'd as two Forces impelling the same Body to Motion; sometimes they conspire, sometimes are indifferent to each other, and sometimes are in some degree opposite.”²⁵ Thus, both benevolence and self-love can motivate a same action simultaneously if there is no opposition between them.

According to Hutcheson, “the only Reason of that apparent want of natural Affection among collateral Relations, is, that these natural Inclinations, in many Cases, are overpower'd by Self-Love, where there happens any Opposition of Interests.” Even where there is no opposition of interests, benevolence is “weaken'd by Displacence, Anger, or Envy.”²⁶

Hutcheson's theory allows us to seek self-love and self-interest which are compatible with benevolence. He says, “if a Man have such strong Benevolence, as would have produc'd an Action without any Views of Self-Interest; that such a Man has also in View private Advantage, along with publick

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Michael B. Gill, “Nature and Association in the Moral Theory of Francis Hutcheson”, *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (1995), 281–282, 296; Michael B. Gill, “Fantastick Associations and Addictive General Rules: A Fundamental Difference between Hutcheson and Hume”, *Hume Studies* 22, no. 1 (1996), 38.

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Gill, “Nature and Association in the Moral Theory of Francis Hutcheson”, 296.

16

Gill, “Fantastick Associations and Addictive General Rules”, 30.

17

Ibid., 37.

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Hutcheson, *Essay*, 7.

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Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 138.

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Ibid., 142.

21

Ibid., 144. On those three causes, see also SMP I.5.VII.

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For example, see Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 86.

23

Ibid., 103.

24

Hutcheson, *Essay*, 143.

25

Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 104.

26

Ibid., 115.

Good, as the Effect of his Action, does no way diminish the Benevolence of the Action.”²⁷ Hutcheson writes about seeking enjoyments such as “the gratifying our superior Senses of Beauty and Harmony, or the Enjoyment of the Pleasures of Knowledge.”

“[A]ltho we pursue these Enjoyments from Self-love, yet, since our Enjoyment cannot be prejudicial to others, no Man is imagin'd any way inhumanly selfish, from the fullest Enjoyment of them which is possible. The same Regularity or Harmony which delights me, may at the same time delight multitudes; the same Theorem shall be equally fruitful of Pleasure, when it has entertain'd thousands. Men therefore are not ashamed of such Pursuits, since they never, of themselves, seduce us into any thing malicious, envious, or ill-natur'd; nor does any one apprehend another too selfish, from his pursuing Objects of unexhausted universal Pleasure.”²⁸

Since seeking those enjoyments does not contradict benevolence, Hutcheson regards it as permissible. Also, Hutcheson thinks that someone of the strongest benevolence may give precedence to himself among those of equal merit. Hutcheson says,

“A Man surely of the strongest Benevolence, may just treat himself as he would do a third Person, who was a Competitor of equal Merit with the other; and as his preferring one to another, in such a Case, would argue no Weakness of Benevolence; so, no more would he evidence it by preferring himself to a Man of only equal Abilities.”²⁹

Moreover, on utilitarian grounds, Hutcheson thinks that self-love and self-interest are desirable or necessary if they contribute to the good of society. He remarks, “every moral Agent justly considers himself as a Part of this rational System, which may be useful to the Whole; so that he may be, in part, an Object of his own Benevolence.”³⁰ Since each individual makes up the whole, Hutcheson claims that one may “not sacrifice an *important private Interest* to a *less important Interest* of others.”³¹ Hutcheson says, “the Preservation of the System requires every one to be innocently solicitous about himself.”³² Hutcheson also remarks,

“Beneficent Actions tend to the publick Good; it is therefore good and kind to give all possible additional Motives to them; and to excite Men, who have some weak Degrees of good Affection, to promote the publick Good more vigorously by Motives of Self-Interest.”³³

Elsewhere Hutcheson points out that benevolence is not an enough motive for industry, and some other motives are also necessary. He says, “probably nine Tenths, at least, of the things which are useful to Mankind, are owing to their Labour and Industry.” But “general Benevolence alone, is not a Motive strong enough to Industry, to bear Labour and Toil, and many other Difficultys which we are averse to from Self-love.” Hutcheson writes,

“For the strengthening therefore our Motives to Industry, we have the strongest Attractions of Blood, of Friendship, of Gratitude, and the additional Motives of Honour, and even of external Interest. Self-love is really as necessary to the Good of the Whole, as Benevolence... Without these additional Motives, Self-love would generally oppose the Motions of Benevolence, and concur with Malice, or influence us to the same Actions which Malice would.”³⁴

Hutcheson also points out that guaranteeing “our Right of Dominion and Property in the Fruits of our Labours” is necessary for our industriousness.³⁵ Thus, he thinks that self-love and self-interest are desirable or necessary if they contribute to the good of society.

We have seen cases where self-love or self-interest does not coincide with benevolence. However, in Hutcheson's view, the truth is that one's “constant pursuit of *publick Good* is the most probable way of promoting his *own Happiness*.”³⁶ Hutcheson says, “the Author of Nature [God]... has given us a Mor-

al Sense, to direct our Actions, and to give us still nobler Pleasures; so that while we are only intending the Good of others, we undesignedly promote our own greatest private Good.”³⁷ Hutcheson also writes,

“If there be also a *moral Sense* in such an Agent, while yet he is inadvertent to the *Connexion of private Happiness* with the *Study of the publick*; he must be perpetually yet more uneasy, either thro’ the apprehended *Neglect of private Interest* when he serves the Publick; or when he pursues only *private Interest*, he will have perpetual *Remorse* and *Dissatisfaction* with his own Temper, thro’ his *moral Sense*. So that the Knowledge of this *Connexion* of private Interest, with the Study of publick Good, seems absolutely necessary to preserve a constant *Satisfaction* of Mind.”³⁸

This passage says that when one “pursues only *private Interest*, he will have perpetual *Remorse* and *Dissatisfaction* with his own Temper, thro’ his *moral Sense*.” The passage suggests that one’s serving the public is important for his private happiness and interest. Thus, in Hutcheson’s view, one’s seeking the public good promotes his private happiness and interest. In this sense too, Hutcheson does not exclude self-love and self-interest from his theory.

As we have seen, Hutcheson does not exclude self-love and self-interest from his theory. In his view, both benevolence and self-love can motivate a same action simultaneously if there is no opposition between them. His theory allows us to seek self-love and self-interest which are compatible with benevolence. Also, someone of the strongest benevolence may give precedence to himself among those of equal merit. Self-love and self-interest are desirable or necessary if they contribute to the good of society. Besides, one’s seeking the public good promotes his private happiness and interest.

According to Gill, “Hutcheson was wrong to think that our original pre-associative constitution [disinterested benevolence] sets the standard of how we ought to live.”³⁹ But, given Hutcheson’s views on self-love and self-interest, Gill’s understanding of Hutcheson’s theory does not fully represent it.

Origins of Hutcheson’s and Hume’s views on original human nature

As we saw, Hutcheson holds that we originally have disinterested benevolence, while Hume thinks that our affections are naturally partial. This section explores why they have these differing views on original human nature.

27
Ibid., 104.

28
Ibid., 159–160.

29
Ibid., 123.

30
Ibid., 122.

31
Hutcheson, *Essay*, 194. For another utilitarian passage, see Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 125.

32
Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 122–123.

33
Ibid., 229.

34
Ibid., 187.

35
Ibid., 188.

36
Hutcheson, *Essay*, 143.

37
Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 99.

38
Hutcheson, *Essay*, 143–144.

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Gill, “Nature and Association in the Moral Theory of Francis Hutcheson”, 296.

To examine why Hutcheson holds that disinterested benevolence is our original nature, it is essential to know where his idea of disinterested benevolence comes from. Hutcheson takes a model of morality from God's characteristics. Hutcheson suggests that God has "a perfectly wise, uniform, impartial Benevolence."⁴⁰ Hutcheson says that "the calm, stable, universal good-will to all, or the most extensive benevolence" characterizes "the moral excellency of the Deity" (SMP I.4.X). God has pure disinterested benevolence. Hutcheson thinks that "the Author of Nature [God]...has given us a Moral Sense, to direct our Actions, and to give us still nobler Pleasures."⁴¹ Hutcheson's following remarks express similar thoughts:

"[O]ur *Senses or Desires*...are fixed for us by the Author of our Nature, subservient to the Interest of the *System*."⁴²

"[W]e entirely depend on God;...all the goods either of mind or body, all our virtues, have been derived from him, and must be preserved or increased by his gracious Providence" (SI I.II. XII).⁴³

"[I]t was God our Creator <and ruler> who implanted this sense of right and wrong in our souls" (SI II.I.III).

"For the very kindest purposes, God has indeed planted a very high standard of virtue in our hearts" (SMP I.9.X).

"*God* declares by the constitution of nature, by the *moral faculty* he has given us, that he espouses the cause of virtue and of the universal happiness" (SMP I.9.XV).

"[O]ur *moral sense*, by the wise constitution of *God*, more approves such affections as are most useful and efficacious for the publick interest" (SMP II.2.II).

"*God*...is the author of all our natural powers and dispositions, our reason, our *moral faculty*, and our affections" (SMP II.3.VII).

Hutcheson also writes, "Virtue it self, or good Dispositions of Mind, are not directly taught, or produc'd by Instruction; they must be originally implanted in our Nature, by its great Author; and afterwards strengthen'd and confirm'd by our own Cultivation."⁴⁴ In this way, Hutcheson denies that virtue originates from something other than the divine, such as tradition, society, or culture. In his view, we originally have disinterested benevolence since God of pure disinterested benevolence implanted it in us.⁴⁵

Unlike Hutcheson, Hume tries to exclude religious views from morality. In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume explains our morality without any appeal to the divine. In the section "Of Miracles" in *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, Hume claims that "no human testimony can have such force as to prove a miracle," that is, "the foundation of a system of religion"⁴⁶ In the essay "Of Suicide", Hume regards our traditional attitude of condemning suicide as superstition, and argues that suicide "may be free from every imputation of guilt or blame."⁴⁷ His essay "Of the Immortality of the Soul" questions metaphysical, moral, and physical arguments for the soul's immortality.⁴⁸ In *The Natural History of Religion* and *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* too, Hume expresses his skeptical views on fundamental features of religion.⁴⁹ Since Hume does not take religious views, our affections look naturally partial for him.

Hutcheson's theological views explain why he holds that disinterested benevolence is our original nature. According to him, although self-love and self-interest also motivate our actions, and although associations of ideas, different opinions of happiness, diversity of systems, and false religious beliefs deprave or distort our moral sense, originally we are disinterestedly benevolent. Hutcheson says, "Let the Obstacles from Self-love be only remov'd, and Nature it self will incline us to Benevolence."⁵⁰ In his view, our original

nature knows how we ought to live, and it is the universal foundation for morality.

Hume's alleged success over Hutcheson

According to Hutcheson, we originally have disinterested benevolence. Yet in his view, self-love and self-interest also motivate our actions; and associations of ideas, different opinions of happiness, diversity of systems, and false religious beliefs deprave or distort our moral sense and produce partiality. As Hume thinks that our affections are naturally partial, Hutcheson holds that where there is no opposition of interests, we have benevolence “with different degrees of Strength, according to the nearer or more remote Relations they stand in to each other.”⁵¹ Thus, both Hutcheson and Hume understand that human character, as it is, is partial.

Before, we saw Hutcheson's example of dying people who wish the happiness of others. Hutcheson rejects the idea that “this Desire of the Happiness of others, after our Exit, is from some *confused Association of Ideas*.”⁵² Since deep reflection does not break the association, he thinks that the desire for others' happiness is our natural disposition. Gill points out that, in Hutcheson's theory, deep reflection is the way to break associations of ideas and restore our original nature.⁵³ In fact, Hutcheson says, “it must be of the highest Importance to all, to strengthen as much as possible, by frequent Meditation and Reflection, the calm Desires either private or publick, rather than the particular Passions, and to make the *calm universal Benevolence* superior to

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Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 182.

41

Ibid., 99.

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Hutcheson, *Essay*, 82.

43

Francis Hutcheson, *Philosophiae Moralis Institutio Compendiaria, with A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, ed. Luigi Turco (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2007). The “I.II. XII” refers to book 1, chapter 2, section 12.

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Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 179.

45

Most of Hutcheson's ideas introduced in this paragraph also appear in Iwasa, “Sentimentalism and Metaphysical Beliefs”, 279–280.

46

David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp, crit. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), section 10, paragraphs 35–36.

47

David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller, rev. ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987), 580.

48

Ibid., 590–598.

49

I admit that in the essay “Of Superstition and Enthusiasm”, Hume regards “*superstition and enthusiasm*” as “the corruptions of true religion.” In his view, “true religion” is the best, while “*superstition and enthusiasm*” are the worst. Hume, *Essays*, 73. But Hume does not explain what the true religion consists of. Also, although I am not sure whether it is irony or not, Hume makes the following theistic remark: “The standard of the one, being founded on the nature of things, is eternal and inflexible, even by the will of the Supreme Being: The standard of the other, arising from the internal frame and constitution of animals, is ultimately derived from that Supreme Will, which bestowed on each being its peculiar nature, and arranged the several classes and orders of existence” (EPM App. 1.21).

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Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 179.

51

Ibid., 115.

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Hutcheson, *Essay*, 28.

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Gill, “Nature and Association in the Moral Theory of Francis Hutcheson”, 292–294.

them.”⁵⁴ By deep reflection, Hutcheson's theory extracts impartial morality from human character as it is.

Hume holds that, for stable and impartial moral judgment, “we fix on some *steady* and *general* points of view” (T 3.3.1.15). According to Gill, this is “not to restore our sentiments to their natural impartial state but to ‘correct’ for their natural partiality.”⁵⁵ Put another way, Hume's theory extracts impartial morality from our natural sentiments by adopting “some *steady* and *general* points of view.”

Both Hutcheson and Hume try to draw morality from the observation of human character as it is. Yet they both understand that human character, as it is, is partial. Therefore, their only way to achieve impartial morality is to extract some moral essence from human character as it is, whether by deep reflection, by adopting “some *steady* and *general* points of view” (T 3.3.1.15), or by some other means. This is what they do. In this sense, there is not much difference between Hutcheson's and Hume's theories.

Unlike Gill's claim, Hume's theory does not succeed over Hutcheson's. Hume does not propose a better way of extracting morality. Other than deep reflection, Hutcheson does not specify how to know our original nature. In Gill's view, deep reflection may not “always lead each of us to approve of impartial benevolence.” Other than deep reflection,

“it is doubtful that Hutcheson would be able to stipulate conditions for justified moral judgments that neither beg the question by importing impartial benevolence into the conditions, nor make it probable that satisfying the conditions will at least sometimes lead us to judge in a manner in conflict with impartial benevolence.”⁵⁶

Instead of deep reflection, Hume proposes adopting “some *steady* and *general* points of view” (T 3.3.1.15). Yet the latter is not better in extracting morality than the former.

First, deep reflection can adopt “some *steady* and *general* points of view” (T 3.3.1.15) if appropriate. In fact, Hutcheson mentions two ways in which reason corrects our moral sense: “suggesting to its *Remembrance* its *former Approbations*, and representing the *general Sense* of Mankind.”⁵⁷

Second, adopting the general viewpoint does not guarantee that we identify appropriate morals. There are at least two ways of adopting the general viewpoint: (1) focusing on what is common and disregard peculiarities or (2) taking the mean. For example, murder provokes a feeling of disapproval in almost all people. In this way, the general viewpoint – whether it is in the reading (1) or (2) – identifies murder as immoral. However, for instance, when it comes to killing animals for human consumption and convenience, people's reactions diverge. Some feel disapproval of it, while others do not. The reading (1) requires us to focus on what is common. So there is no way to make a moral judgment on this issue. The reading (2) requires us to take the mean. If 5 percent of people feel disapproval of killing animals for human consumption and convenience, while 95 percent feel approval of it, the mean is largely in favor of killing animals. Now, adopting the general viewpoint – whether it is in the reading (1) or (2) – does not guarantee that we identify appropriate morals. Geoffrey Sayre-McCord's following statement suggests why this is the case: “It might be that one person's heart beats more warmly in the cause of virtue than another's, but as they leave aside their own interests, and control for the distortions of perspective, they will inevitably approve of the same characters to roughly the same degree.”⁵⁸ One may feel approval of

a certain degree of some mental quality, while others do not feel approval of any degree of the quality. The reading (1) requires us to disregard his view. But if the quality is moral, disregarding his view leads us away from appropriate morality. The reading (2) requires us to take the mean. But if the higher degree of the quality one has, the more moral, taking the mean does not lead us to appropriate morality. People may feel approval of different degrees of some mental quality. The reading (1) requires us to take the lowest degree of the quality which people feel approval of in common. The reading (2) requires us to take the mean. But if the higher degree of the quality one has, the more moral, the readings (1) and (2) do not lead us to appropriate morality. Let us consider sympathy as an example. Only a small percentage of people feel approval of a high degree of sympathy that extends not only to all humans but to animals being killed for human consumption and convenience. Since others feel approval of only less degrees of sympathy, in the readings (1) and (2), such a high degree of sympathy is not more moral than what those readings consider moral. Yet extending the scope of sympathy is a sign of moral progress, as we have extended its scope to slaves in our history. The more sympathetic, the more moral. In this example, the readings (1) and (2) do not lead us to appropriate morality. Thus, adopting the general viewpoint – whether it is in the reading (1) or (2) – does not guarantee that we identify appropriate morals.

Lastly, deep reflection in Hutcheson's theory is not just adopting the general viewpoint. It breaks associations of ideas. Hutcheson says,

“When the Prejudice arises from Associations of Ideas without any natural Connection, we must frequently force our selves to bear Representations of those Objects, or the Use of them when separated from the disagreeable Idea; and this may at last disjoin the unreasonable Association, especially if we can join new agreeable Ideas to them.”⁵⁹

Deep reflection also strengthens “the *calm universal Benevolence*” and makes it superior to “the particular Passions”. Deep reflection regulates not only “*unkind or destructive Affections, our Anger, Hatred, or Aversion to rational Agents*” but “*tender and benign Affections, lest we should be hurried into universal and absolute Evil, by the Appearance of particular Good.*”⁶⁰ Since deep reflection has those roles besides adopting the general viewpoint, it may be able to avoid the problem in adopting the general viewpoint.

Also, unlike Hutcheson's theory, Hume's theory does not explain all moral phenomena. Hutcheson's theory explains errors in our moral judgments by ascribing them to forces other than our original nature. According to Gill, however, Hutcheson's theory is “not the best explanation of the observable

54
Hutcheson, *Essay*, 111.

55
Gill, “Nature and Association in the Moral Theory of Francis Hutcheson”, 296. Gill interprets Hume's theory as a general viewpoint theory, which identifies moral principles by taking a general viewpoint. It is also possible to interpret it as an ideal observer theory, which draws moral principles from sentimental reactions of an ideal observer. I discuss those theories elsewhere.

56
Ibid., 295.

57
Hutcheson, *Essay*, 178.

58
Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, “On Why Hume's ‘General Point of View’ Isn't Ideal—and Shouldn't Be”, *Social Philosophy and Policy* 11, no. 1 (1994), 226.

59
Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 73.

60
Hutcheson, *Essay*, 111.

phenomena of human conduct.”⁶¹ On the other hand, Gill holds that Hume's theory, which has a distinct role for association, “could be used to explain not only moral error but the phenomena of morality as a whole.” As we saw, in Hume's view, our affections are naturally partial. But how can his theory explain the existence of those whose affections are naturally impartial? For example, some people like Mother Teresa have such affections. It is rash to think that Hume's theory explains “the phenomena of morality as a whole”. Gill claims that Hume's theory is successful because it severs the link between explaining and justifying morality. But why is severing the link so important? Hume's theory succeeds in it, but that does not make his theory better in explaining “the phenomena of morality as a whole.”⁶² Considering that Hutcheson's theory is better in explaining them, his view on original human nature may be closer to truth than Hume's.

Conclusion

Hume thinks that human affections are naturally partial, while Hutcheson holds that humans originally have disinterested benevolence. Gill argues that Hume's moral theory succeeds over Hutcheson's because the former severs the link between explaining and justifying morality. According to Gill, Hutcheson is wrong to assume that our original nature should be the basis of morality. Gill's understanding of Hutcheson's theory does not fully represent it, since for Hutcheson self-love and self-interest under certain conditions are permissible, or even desirable or necessary for the good of society. There is not much difference between Hutcheson's and Hume's theories in the sense that they both extract impartial morality from human character as it is. Hume's theory does not succeed over Hutcheson's because Hume does not propose a better way of extracting morality nor explain all moral phenomena.

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Noriaki Iwasa

Humeov navodni uspjeh nad Hutchesonom

Sažetak

David Hume je smatrao da su ljudske sklonosti prirodno pristrane, dok je Francis Hutcheson držao da su ljudi izvorno bezinteresno dobronamjerni. Michael Gill tvrdi da je Humeova moralna teorija uspješnija od Hutchesonove jer prekida vezu između objašnjavanja i opravdavanja moralnosti. Prema Gillu, Hutcheson pogrešno pretpostavlja da naša izvorna priroda treba biti temelj moralnosti. Gillovo shvaćanje Hutchesonove teorije ne predstavlja tu teoriju u potpunosti budući da su za Hutchesona ljubav prema sebi i samo-interes dopustivi u određenim okolnostima, ili čak poželjni ili nužni za dobro društva. Nema većih razlika između Hutchesonove i Humeove teorije u smislu da obje izvode nepristranu moralnost iz ljudske naravi kao takve. Humeova teorija nije uspješnija jer on ne predlaže bolji način izvoda moralnosti niti objašnjenja svih moralnih fenomena.

Ključne riječi

Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Michael B. Gill, etika, ljudska priroda, nepristranost, dobronamjernost, pristranost, samo-interes, ljubav prema sebi

Noriaki Iwasa

Humes angeblicher Erfolg über Hutcheson

Zusammenfassung

David Hume charakterisierte die Menschenneigungen als naturgegeben voreingenommen, während Francis Hutcheson des Dafürhaltens war, die Menschen seien ursprünglich unbefangene guttätig. Michael Gill findet, Humes Moraltheorie überwinde jene Hutchesons, dank ihres Abbruchs der Verbindung zwischen der Erläuterung und der Rechtfertigung der Moralität. Gill zufolge irrt sich Hutcheson in der Annahme, unsere originäre Natur habe als Basis der Moralität zu dienen. Gills Lesart der Theorie Hutchesons übermitteln ebendieselbe nicht restlos, da für Hutcheson Selbstliebe einschließlich des Selbstinteresses unter speziellen Umständen zugelassen ist, überdies sogar erwünscht oder unentbehrlich zum Wohlergehen der Gesellschaft. Es besteht keine schwerwiegende Differenz zwischen Hutchesons und Humes Theorien im Sinne, dass beide die unvoreingenommene Moralität aus dem menschlichen Charakter als solchem

61

Michael B. Gill, *The British Moralists on Human Nature and the Birth of Secular Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 194.

62

Gill, "Nature and Association in the Moral Theory of Francis Hutcheson", 281.

herleiten. Humes Theorie triumphiert nicht über die Hutcheson-Theorie, weil Hume weder einen angemesseneren Weg der Moralitätsextraktion noch einen besseren Weg der Auslegung sämtlicher Moralphänomene eingeschlagen hat.

Schlüsselwörter

Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Michael B. Gill, Ethik, die menschliche Natur, Unvoreingenommenheit, Güte, Voreingenommenheit, Selbstinteresse, Selbstliebe

Noriaki Iwasa

Le triomphe supposé de Hume sur Hutcheson

Résumé

David Hume pense que les affections de l'homme sont naturellement partielles, tandis que Francis Hutcheson considère que l'homme est originellement d'une bienveillance désintéressée. Michael Gill soutient que la théorie morale de Hume l'emporte sur celle de Hutcheson car cette dernière rompt le lien entre l'explication et la justification de la moralité. D'après Gill, Hutcheson a tort d'assumer que notre nature originelle devrait être le fondement de la moralité. La compréhension par Gill de la théorie de Hutcheson ne reflète pas celle-ci complètement puisque l'amour de soi-même et l'intérêt personnel de Hutcheson sont, sous certaines conditions, admissibles, voire souhaitables ou nécessaires pour le bien de la société. Il y a peu de différence entre les théories de Hutcheson et de Hume dans le sens où elles déduisent la moralité impartiale du caractère humain tel qu'il est. La théorie de Hume ne l'emporte pas sur celle de Hutcheson car Hume ne propose pas une meilleure façon de déduire la moralité ni d'expliquer tous les phénomènes moraux.

Mots-clés

Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Michael B. Gill, éthique, bienveillance, partialité, intérêt personnel, amour de soi