

# *Sentimentalism and the Is-Ought Problem*

NORIAKI IWASA  
*Center for General Education,  
University of Tokushima*

*Examining the moral sense theories of Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, and Adam Smith from the perspective of the is-ought problem, this essay shows that the moral sense or moral sentiments in those theories alone cannot identify appropriate morals. According to one interpretation, Hume's or Smith's theory is just a description of human nature. In this case, it does not answer the question of how we ought to live. According to another interpretation, it has some normative implications. In this case, it draws normative claims from human nature. Anyway, the sentiments of anger, resentment, vengeance, superiority, sympathy, and benevolence show that drawing norms from human nature is sometimes morally problematic. The changeability of the moral sense and moral sentiments in Hume's and Smith's theories supports this idea. Hutcheson's theory is morally more appropriate because it bases morality on disinterested benevolence. Yet disinterested benevolence is not enough for morality. There are no sentiments the presence of which alone makes any action moral.*

**Keywords:** Hutcheson, Hume, Smith, moral sense, moral sentiment, human nature, is-ought problem, metaethics, ethics

## *1. Introduction*

Examining the moral sense theories of Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, and Adam Smith from the perspective of the is-ought problem, this essay shows that the moral sense or moral sentiments in those theories alone cannot identify appropriate morals.<sup>1</sup> According to one interpreta-

<sup>1</sup> Previous to Hutcheson, the third Earl of Shaftesbury used 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. This essay does not discuss Shaftesbury's

tion, Hume's or Smith's theory is just a description of human nature. In this case, it does not answer the question of how we ought to live. According to another interpretation, it has some normative implications. In this case, it draws normative claims from human nature. Examining the sentiments of anger, resentment, vengeance, superiority, sympathy, and benevolence, I argue that drawing norms from human nature is sometimes morally problematic. To support this, I show that the moral sense and moral sentiments in Hume's and Smith's theories can change over times. Hutcheson's theory is morally more appropriate because it bases morality on disinterested benevolence. Yet I argue that disinterested benevolence is not enough for morality, and that there are no sentiments the presence of which alone makes any action moral.

## 2. On Drawing Norms from Human Nature

### 2.1 Introduction

Hume and Smith study human nature. According to one interpretation, Hume's or Smith's theory is just a description of human nature.<sup>2</sup> In this case, it does not answer the question of how we ought to live. According to another interpretation, it has some normative implications.<sup>3</sup> In this case, it draws normative claims from human nature. Anyway,

moral sense theory because he does not much talk about the moral sense in his theory. Hutcheson holds that we perceive moral good (virtue) or moral evil (vice) in actions by the moral sense, which is an extra sense beyond the five senses. Smith rejects the idea of the moral sense. He introduces the idea of moral sentiments, which arise from sympathy with, want of sympathy with, or antipathy to an agent's motives, sympathy with the gratitude or resentment of a receiver (the one affected by the agent's action), and so on. Hume uses both the terms 'moral sense' and 'moral sentiment.' In his theory, they are almost synonymous. They arise from sympathy with a receiver's feelings toward an action itself and its effects.

<sup>2</sup> As we will see, Hume thinks that drawing 'ought' from 'is' is impossible. Smith says, "the present inquiry is not concerning a matter of right,...but concerning a matter of fact" (TMS II.i.5.10). Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1982). The "II.i.5.10" refers to part 2, section 1, chapter 5, paragraph 10.

<sup>3</sup> For normative interpretations of Hume's theory, see, for example, Stephen Darwall, *The British moralists and the internal 'ought': 1640-1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 287-318; Robert Shaver, "Hume's Moral Theory?" *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (1995); Tito Magri, "Natural Obligation and Normative Motivation in Hume's Treatise," *Hume Studies* 22, no. 2 (1996); Jessica Spector, "Value in Fact: Naturalism and Normativity in Hume's Moral Psychology," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 41, no. 2 (2003). For normative interpretations of Smith's theory, see, for example, Charles L. Griswold, *Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 33, 49-51, 103-4, 144, 177-78, 190, 256, 307, 329; Samuel Fleischacker, *A Third Concept of Liberty: Judgment and Freedom in Kant and Adam Smith* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 145-46; James R. Otteson, *Adam Smith's Marketplace of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 10-11, 227-41, 254-57; D. D. Raphael, *The Impartial Spectator: Adam Smith's Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5-6, 76, 78-79.

from the fact that we are what we are, it does not necessarily follow that we ought to be what we are. Drawing 'ought' from 'is' is sometimes morally problematic. It is Hume who first raised the is-ought problem. He writes,

In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this *ought*, or *ought not*, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it shou'd be observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time that a reason shou'd be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it (T 3.1.1.27).<sup>4</sup>

Thus, Hume thinks that drawing 'ought' from 'is' is impossible.<sup>5</sup>

Some philosophers try to break through the is-ought barrier. For example, Marvin Zimmerman does so by dispensing with 'ought' statements. He thinks that 'is' statements can achieve everything 'ought' statements can achieve. Zimmerman argues that, as effectively as 'ought' statements, 'is' statements can make someone do what we want him to do. Zimmerman writes,

If a man wants to break promises, tell lies, rape or kill, which is better, merely telling him he ought not to, even if it succeeds in restraining him, or telling him that if he does what he wants, he will be disliked, ostracized, punished or killed? This is not all. We can not only tell him these things, we can do some or all of these things. But there is even more, much more and even more important. We can use all our resources of knowledge, in the sciences, in psychology, economics, sociology, etc., and the further acquisition of knowledge to get him and others to do the things we want him and others to do. Note that these are all "is" or "is supportable" statements.<sup>6</sup>

Also, Max Black and John Searle provide concrete examples where one can draw 'ought' from 'is'.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). The "3.1.1.27" refers to book 3, part 1, section 1, paragraph 27.

<sup>5</sup> For challenges to this standard interpretation of Hume's is-ought passage, see, for example, A. C. MacIntyre, "Hume on 'Is' and 'Ought,'" *Philosophical Review* 68, no. 4 (1959); Geoffrey Hunter, "Hume on Is and Ought," *Philosophy* 37, no. 140 (1962).

<sup>6</sup> M. Zimmerman, "The 'Is-Ought': An Unnecessary Dualism," *Mind* 71, no. 281 (1962): 56.

<sup>7</sup> Max Black, "The Gap Between 'Is' and 'Should,'" *Philosophical Review* 73, no. 2 (1964); John R. Searle, "How to Derive 'Ought' from 'Is,'" *Philosophical Review* 73, no. 1 (1964). D. Z. Phillips challenges Black's argument. See D. Z. Phillips, "The Possibilities of Moral Advice," *Analysis* 25, no. 2 (1964). For challenges to Searle's argument, see, for example, Antony Flew, "On Not Deriving 'Ought' from 'Is,'" *Analysis*, 25, no. 2 (1964); R. M. Hare, "The Promising Game," *Revue Internationale*

This essay discusses not epistemological relation between ‘is’ and ‘ought,’ but only moral relation between them. This section shows that drawing ‘ought’ from ‘is’ is at least morally problematic as to the sentiments of anger, resentment, vengeance, superiority, sympathy, and benevolence. Thus, it becomes clear that drawing norms from human nature is sometimes morally problematic. The is-ought thesis shows that Hume’s and Smith’s theories are morally problematic as ethics, whether they are descriptive or normative.

## 2.2 Anger

First, I want to examine the sentiment of anger. Hume says, “As love is *immediately agreeable* to the person, who is actuated by it, and hatred *immediately disagreeable*; this may also be a considerable reason, why we praise all the passions that partake of the former, and blame all those that have any considerable share of the latter” (T 3.3.3.4).

On the other hand, Hume says, “We are not, however, to imagine, that all the angry passions are vicious, tho’ they are disagreeable. There is a certain indulgence due to human nature in this respect. Anger and hatred are passions inherent in our very frame and constitution. The want of them, on some occasions, may even be a proof of weakness and imbecility” (T 3.3.3.7). This passage implies that, in Hume’s view, anger and hatred are sometimes desirable.<sup>8</sup>

Irrespective of whether Hume draws a norm from human nature, from the fact that many of us have a tendency to get angry on some occasions, it does not follow that anger is sometimes desirable. There are some religious views that anger—regardless of types, causes, aims, and circumstances—is not good. In Buddhism, anger and hatred belong to one of the three evils of the mind that one needs to overcome if he wishes to reach *nirvana*, the blissful state free from suffering. In Islam, contrary to what Hume thinks, anger is a sign of weakness and is something one should overcome. Muhammad says, “The strong is not the one who overcomes the people by his strength, but the strong is the one who controls himself while in anger.”<sup>9</sup> Apart from those reli-

*de Philosophie* 18, no. 70 (1964); James E. McClellan and B. Paul Komisar, “On Deriving ‘Ought’ from ‘Is,’” *Analysis* 25, no. 2 (1964); James Thomson and Judith Thomson, “How Not to Derive ‘Ought’ from ‘Is,’” *Philosophical Review* 73, no. 4 (1964). Hudson tries to defend Searle’s claim against those criticisms. See W. D. Hudson, “The ‘Is-Ought’ Controversy,” *Analysis* 25, no. 6 (1965).

<sup>8</sup> Smith thinks that anger is disagreeable and “the greatest poison to the happiness of a good mind” (TMS I.ii.3.7). Yet elsewhere he says, “just indignation is nothing but anger restrained and properly attempered to what the impartial spectator can enter into” (TMS VI.iii.9). This suggests that, in Smith’s view, properly restrained anger can be right. Smith uses the words ‘anger’ and ‘resentment’ interchangeably. While anger for Hume does not necessarily produce the sentiment of vengeance, anger for Smith and resentment for Hume and Smith do.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Imâm Zain-ud-Din Ahmad bin Abdul-Lateef Az-Zubaidi, *The Translation of the Meanings of Summarized Sahîh Al-Bukhârî: Arabic-English*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khân (Riyadh: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam, 1994), volume 8, number 135.

gious views, anger prevents us from creating a peaceful and harmonious world. This is because anger is at the opposite end of peace and harmony. So there will be no genuine peace and harmony if there is anger, regardless of types, causes, aims, and circumstances. Besides, various medical researches suggest that anger gives negative effects to one's health. If we overcome anger, we can live a healthier life. Given all these, anger is always morally inappropriate. This is an example where drawing a norm from human nature is morally problematic.

### 2.3 *Resentment and Vengeance*

Next, I want to examine the sentiments of resentment and vengeance. The latter arises from the former. Hume briefly discusses those sentiments at several places. He says, "When I receive any injury from another, I often feel a violent passion of resentment, which makes me desire his evil and punishment, independent of all considerations of pleasure and advantage to myself" (T 2.3.3.9).<sup>10</sup> Hume also points out that where sufferings of our favorite people "proceed from the treachery, cruelty, or tyranny of an enemy, our breasts are affected with the liveliest resentment against the author of these calamities" (EPM 5.27).<sup>11</sup> In "A Dissertation on the Passions," Hume says, "The punishment of an adversary, by gratifying revenge, is good."<sup>12</sup> Thus, he approves of vengeance.

Smith also discusses resentment and vengeance. He says, "that action must appear to deserve punishment, which appears to be the proper and approved object of resentment" (TMS II.i.1.3). Here punishment "is to return evil for evil that has been done" (TMS II.i.1.4). Smith also says, "Resentment cannot be fully gratified, unless the offender is not only made to grieve in his turn, but to grieve for that particular wrong which we have suffered from him" (TMS II.i.1.6).

How do we judge whether an agent's action deserves punishment? According to Smith, our heart first considers "the motives of the agent," and then "the resentment of the sufferer." Smith says, "we cannot indeed enter into the resentment of the sufferer, unless our heart beforehand disapproves the motives of the agent, and renounces all fellow-feeling with them" (TMS II.i.5.5). This is because the agent's motives may not be disapprovable while the sufferer feels resentment.

Smith defends retributive justice from a utilitarian perspective. He holds that "society cannot subsist unless the laws of justice are tolerably observed" because "no social intercourse can take place among men

<sup>10</sup> According to Hume, there is also calm resentment, which causes "no disorder in the soul" (T 2.3.3.8).

<sup>11</sup> David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp, crit. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). The "5.27" refers to section 5, paragraph 27.

<sup>12</sup> David Hume, *A Dissertation on the Passions, The Natural History of Religion*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp, crit. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

who do not generally abstain from injuring one another" (TMS II.ii.3.6). "In order to enforce the observation of justice," Smith says, "Nature has implanted in the human breast that consciousness of ill-desert, those terrors of merited punishment which attend upon its violation, as the great safe-guards of the association of mankind, to protect the weak, to curb the violent, and to chastise the guilty" (TMS II.ii.3.4). Smith also writes,

Resentment seems to have been given us by nature for defence, and for defence only. It is the safeguard of justice and the security of innocence. It prompts us to beat off the mischief which is attempted to be done to us, and to retaliate that which is already done; that the offender may be made to repent of his injustice, and that others, through fear of the like punishment, may be terrified from being guilty of the like offence (TMS II.ii.1.4).

Yet, on the other hand, Smith suggests that retaliation is not just for social utility. On murder Smith says, "Nature, antecedent to all reflections upon the utility of punishment, has...stamped upon the human heart, in the strongest and most indelible characters, an immediate and instinctive approbation of the sacred and necessary law of retaliation" (TMS II.i.2.5). Thus, retaliation is also for retributive satisfaction.

Smith thinks that resentment is "the safeguard of justice" (TMS II.ii.1.4), and therefore necessary for society. Yet what we need is justice, not resentment. Smith admits that many people regard "the sense of the ill desert of vice" as "laudable," while resentment as "odious" (TMS II.i.5.7). They object to basing the former on the latter. Smith gives three replies to this objection.

First, Smith points out that resentment "is not disapproved of when properly humbled and entirely brought down to the level of the sympathetic indignation of the spectator" (TMS II.i.5.8). But, as we see in many feuds, wars, and terrorism, retaliation can create an endless chain of conflicts, and will not produce a positive result in the long run. Retaliation arises from resentment. In fact, Smith says that properly restrained, "noble and generous resentment" approved by the impartial spectator still aims at retaliation (TMS I.i.5.4). Therefore, we should not have any degree of resentment from the beginning.

Second, the "inspired writers" talked often or strongly about "the wrath and anger of God." Smith asks how the same passions could always be "vicious and evil" for humans (TMS II.i.5.9). However, from the fact that God sometimes has resentment, it does not follow that we can morally have it too. God has a right to end anyone's life, while humans do not. Similarly, resentment may be something only God can morally have.

Third, Smith says, "the present inquiry is not concerning a matter of right,...but concerning a matter of fact. We are not at present examining upon what principles a perfect being would approve of the punishment of bad actions; but upon what principles so weak and imperfect a creature as man actually and in fact approves of it" (TMS II.i.5.10). But this does not answer the question of how we ought to

live. This statement admits that Smith's theory does not represent appropriate morals.

Smith claims that if one cannot restrain injustice "by gentle and fair means, he must beat it down by force and violence, and at any rate must put a stop to its further progress." Smith also says, "he often approves of the enforcement of the laws of justice even by the capital punishment of those who violate them. The disturber of the public peace is hereby removed out of the world, and others are terrified by his fate from imitating his example." Practically speaking, the use of "force and violence" (TMS II.ii.3.6) is necessary to stop injustice in urgency. But we must distinguish the urgent need to stop injustice from the case of capital punishment. While there is no proper alternative to the former, there are proper alternatives to the latter. We can reform an offender. Even if the offender is so wicked that he has no prospect of reformation, it does not automatically call for capital punishment. We can give him life imprisonment instead.

Irrespective of whether Hume and Smith draw a norm from human nature, from the fact that most of us feel resentment against an offender, it does not follow that we should take vengeance on him. There is justice without resentment and vengeance. Considering that retaliation can create an endless chain of conflict, taking vengeance on an offender is morally inappropriate. It is morally appropriate to reform him without resentment. Even if we have to use force to stop injustice immediately, the force does not have to stem from resentment. It is better if the force arises from the need to stop injustice, and much better if the force arises from love. It is morally appropriate to overcome the sentiments of resentment and vengeance to create a peaceful and harmonious world. Smith seems to understand this when he writes,

The nobleness of pardoning appears, upon many occasions, superior even to the most perfect propriety of resenting. When either proper acknowledgments have been made by the offending party; or, even without any such acknowledgments, when the public interest requires that the most mortal enemies should unite for the discharge of some important duty, the man who can cast away all animosity, and act with confidence and cordiality towards the person who had most grievously offended him, seems justly to merit our highest admiration (TMS VI.iii.9).

I agree with this statement. But I disagree with Smith when he justifies resentment and vengeance. This is another example where drawing a norm from human nature is morally problematic.

We have examined the sentiments of anger, resentment, and vengeance. Smith calls those sentiments "*unsocial Passions*" (TMS I.ii.3). Some might defend Hume's or Smith's theory by claiming that those sentiments are mere sentiments not *moral* sentiments. In fact, Charles Griswold does not regard them as moral.<sup>13</sup> In Smith's view, anger, resentment, and vengeance are "the guardians of justice" (TMS I.ii.3.4),

<sup>13</sup> Griswold, *Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment*, 46.



and the impartial spectator can sympathize with properly restrained anger, resentment, and vengeance (TMS I.i.5.4; VI.ii.intro.2; VI.iii.9). These imply that proper anger, resentment, and vengeance are morally relevant.

Even if those sentiments are nonmoral or immoral for Hume or Smith, the moral sense or moral sentiments in their theories alone cannot identify them as nonmoral or immoral because the spectators in those theories approve them. Therefore, the standard for identifying proper anger, resentment, or vengeance as nonmoral or immoral must be something other than the moral sense and moral sentiments.

#### 2.4 *Superiority*

A similar criticism also applies to the sentiment of superiority. Hume lists the causes of pride: mental qualities such as “wit, good-sense, learning, courage, justice, integrity” and bodily qualities like “beauty, strength, agility, good mein, address in dancing, riding, fencing, and... dexterity in any manual business or manufacture.” There are also other objects which can cause our pride such as “[o]ur country, family, children, relations, riches, houses, gardens, horses, dogs, cloaths” (T 2.1.2.5). Hume says, “the very same qualities and circumstances, which are the causes of pride or self-esteem, are also the causes of vanity or the desire of reputation” (T 2.2.1.9).

Hume claims that “pride, or an over-weening conceit of ourselves, must be vicious; since it causes uneasiness in all men, and presents them every moment with a disagreeable comparison” (T 3.3.2.7). But Hume does not think that pride is always vicious. He says, “tho’ an over-weening conceit of our own merit be vicious and disagreeable, nothing can be more laudable, than to have a value for ourselves, where we really have qualities that are valuable” (T 3.3.2.8).

Hume thinks that pride is desirable under the following conditions: First, the pride must be “a due degree of pride” in valuable qualities one has (T 3.3.2.8). In other words, it must be “well-founded.” Second, to be “agreeable and inoffensive” (T 3.3.2.10), the pride must be “regulated by the decorums of good-breeding and politeness” (T 3.3.2.14). For example, we should “know our rank and station in the world, whether it be fix’d by our birth, fortune, employments, talents or reputation” and “feel the sentiment and passion of pride in conformity to it” (T 3.3.2.11).

Hume holds that the merits of pride are “its utility and its agreeableness to ourselves; by which it capacitates us for business, and, at the same time, gives us an immediate satisfaction” (T 3.3.2.14). “[A] due degree of pride” has the first advantage because it “makes us sensible of our own merit, and gives us a confidence and assurance in all our projects and enterprizes.” Hume says, “Whatever capacity any one may be endow’d with, ’tis entirely useless to him, if he be not acquainted with it, and form not designs suitable to it.” Hume even remarks,



“were it allowable to err on either side, ’twou’d be more advantageous to over-rate our merit, than to form ideas of it, below its just standard” (T 3.3.2.8). Pride enables us not only to exercise our ability, but to fulfill our potential. In the essay “Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences,” Hume points out that “praise and glory” is “the greatest encourager of the noble arts.”<sup>14</sup>

There is another merit of pride, that is, “its agreeableness to others” (T 3.3.2.8). In fact, as Hume points out, when we look at history, “all those great actions and sentiments, which have become the admiration of mankind, are founded on nothing but pride and self-esteem” (T 3.3.2.12). Hume also writes,

In general we may observe, that whatever we call *heroic virtue*, and admire under the character of greatness and elevation of mind, is either nothing but a steady and well-establish’d pride and self-esteem, or partakes largely of that passion. Courage, intrepidity, ambition, love of glory, magnanimity, and all the other shining virtues of that kind, have plainly a strong mixture of self-esteem in them, and derive a great part of their merit from that origin (T 3.3.2.13).

Hume criticizes monkish virtues like self-denial, humility, and silence which are the opposite not only of pride but of anger and vengefulness.

Celibacy, fasting, penance, mortification, self-denial, humility, silence, solitude, and the whole train of monkish virtues; for what reason are they every where rejected by men of sense, but because they serve to no manner of purpose; neither advance a man’s fortune in the world, nor render him a more valuable member of society; neither qualify him for the entertainment of company, nor increase his power of self-enjoyment? We observe, on the contrary, that they cross all these desirable ends; stupify the understanding and harden the heart, obscure the fancy and sour the temper. We justly, therefore, transfer them to the opposite column, and place them in the catalogue of vices; nor has any superstition force sufficient among men of the world, to pervert entirely these natural sentiments. A gloomy, hair-brained enthusiast, after his death, may have a place in the calendar; but will scarcely ever be admitted, when alive, into intimacy and society, except by those who are as delirious and dismal as himself (EPM 9.3).

Thus, Hume criticizes the monkish virtues because he believes that, unlike pride, they produce neither utility nor agreeableness to us or to others. For Hume, humility and modesty are different ideas. He says, “modesty, or a just sense of our weakness, is esteem’d virtuous, and procures the good-will of every one” (T 3.3.2.1). In the essay “Of Impudence and Modesty,” Hume explains that confidence, attended by vice and folly, degenerates into impudence, while diffidence, helped by virtue and wisdom, becomes modesty.<sup>15</sup> This also shows that he considers modesty virtuous.

<sup>14</sup> David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller, rev. ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987), 136.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 555–56.

So far, we have seen Hume's idea of pride which seeks the praise of others. But this is not his only idea of pride. He says, "A man of sense and merit is pleas'd with himself, independent of all foreign considerations" (T 3.3.2.7). In contrast, vanity consists in "an importunate and open demand of praise and admiration." It is "a sure symptom of the want of true dignity and elevation of mind" (EPM 8.11). Hume praises a sage with philosophical tranquility undisturbed by worldly matters, including honors, reputation, riches, poverty, pain, sorrow, and anxiety.

Of the same class of virtues with courage is that undisturbed philosophical TRANQUILLITY, superior to pain, sorrow, anxiety, and each assault of adverse fortune. Conscious of his own virtue, say the philosophers, the sage elevates himself above every accident of life; and securely placed in the temple of wisdom, looks down on inferior mortals, engaged in pursuit of honours, riches, reputation, and every frivolous enjoyment. These pretensions, no doubt, when stretched to the utmost, are, by far, too magnificent for human nature. They carry, however, a grandeur with them, which seizes the spectator, and strikes him with admiration. And the nearer we can approach in practice, to this sublime tranquillity and indifference (for we must distinguish it from a stupid insensibility) the more secure enjoyment shall we attain within ourselves, and the more greatness of mind shall we discover to the world. The philosophical tranquillity may, indeed, be considered only as a branch of magnanimity.

Who admires not SOCRATES; his perpetual serenity and contentment, amidst the greatest poverty and domestic vexations; his resolute contempt of riches, and his magnanimous care of preserving liberty, while he refused all assistance from his friends and disciples, and avoided even the dependence of an obligation? (EPM 7.16–17).

This passage seems inconsistent with Hume's criticism on monkish virtues. He criticizes monkish silence, while praising philosophical tranquility. He criticizes monkish humility and monkish inability or refusal to increase one's fortune and power of self-enjoyment, while praising the sage's contempt for honors, reputation, riches, and every frivolous enjoyment. How can we explain the seeming inconsistency? Elizabeth Dimm explains it as follows: although Hume has some insight into what a sage's life is like, he does not fully know it because of his lack of experience.<sup>16</sup> As we have just seen, Hume mentions a sense of independence which does not seek the praise of others. I call it 'self-esteem in the sense of independence.' On the other hand, I call the pride which seeks the praise of others 'self-esteem in the sense of superiority.' Hume suggests the existence of "a noble pride and spirit, which may openly display itself in its full extent, when one lies under calumny or oppression of any kind" (EPM 8.10). Hume also says, "Who is not struck with any signal instance of GREATNESS of MIND or Dignity of Character; with elevation of sentiment, disdain of slavery, and with that noble pride and spirit, which arises from conscious virtue?" (EPM 7.4). The "noble pride and spirit" here represents the sense

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Dimm, "Hume and the Monkish Virtues," *Philosophical Investigations* 10, no. 3 (1987): 225.

of independence rather than that of superiority. According to Hume, modesty “excludes not a noble pride and spirit” (EPM 8.10).

Smith also discusses pride. Although Hume uses the words ‘pride’ and ‘self-esteem’ interchangeably, Smith distinguishes between them. In his view, pride is a part of self-esteem, a comprehensive category. He writes,

We frequently, not only pardon, but thoroughly enter into and sympathize with the excessive self-estimation of those splendid characters in which we observe a great and distinguished superiority above the common level of mankind. We call them spirited, magnanimous, and high-minded; words which all involve in their meaning a considerable degree of praise and admiration. But we cannot enter into and sympathize with the excessive self-estimation of those characters in which we can discern no such distinguished superiority. We are disgusted and revolted by it; and it is with some difficulty that we can either pardon or suffer it: We call it pride or vanity; two words, of which the latter always, and the former for the most part, involve in their meaning a considerable degree of blame (TMS VI.iii.33).

Thus, Smith classifies the self-estimation into what we can sympathize with and what we cannot. The latter consists of pride or vanity, both of which Smith calls vices. According to Smith, “[t]he proud man is sincere, and, in the bottom of his heart, is convinced of his own superiority” (TMS VI.iii.35). On the other hand, “[t]he vain man is not sincere, and, in the bottom of his heart, is very seldom convinced of that superiority which he wishes you to ascribe to him” (TMS VI.iii.36).

Smith holds that as long as the self-esteem is something we can sympathize with, it is desirable. He says, “The desire of the esteem and admiration of other people, when for qualities and talents which are the natural and proper objects of esteem and admiration, is the real love of true glory; a passion which, if not the very best passion of human nature, is certainly one of the best” (TMS VI.iii.46).

Like Hume, Smith thinks that underrating oneself is worse than overrating oneself. If one underrates himself, “[h]e is not only more unhappy in his own feelings than either the proud or the vain, but he is much more liable to every sort of ill-usage from other people.” Therefore, “[i]n almost all cases, it is better to be a little too proud, than, in any respect, too humble; and, in the sentiment of self-estimation, some degree of excess seems, both to the person and to the impartial spectator, to be less disagreeable than any degree of defect” (TMS VI.iii.52). Also, like Hume, Smith criticizes monkish virtues as “the futile mortifications of a monastery” (TMS III.2.35; cf. WN V.i.f.30<sup>17</sup>).

However, this is not Smith’s only view on self-esteem. He says that a wise man “often feels the highest in doing what he knows to be praiseworthy, though he knows equally well that no praise is ever to be bestowed upon it” (TMS III.2.7). Smith also writes,

<sup>17</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R. H. Campbell, A. S. Skinner, and W. B. Todd, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1981). The “V.i.f.30” refers to book 5, chapter 1, section f, paragraph 30.

The love of just fame, of true glory, even for its own sake, and independent of any advantage which he can derive from it, is not unworthy even of a wise man. He sometimes, however, neglects, and even despises it; and he is never more apt to do so than when he has the most perfect assurance of the perfect propriety of every part of his own conduct. His self-approbation, in this case, stands in need of no confirmation from the approbation of other men. It is alone sufficient, and he is contented with it. This self-approbation, if not the only, is at least the principal object, about which he can or ought to be anxious. The love of it, is the love of virtue.

In short, Smith claims that a wise man has a pure desire to do what is praise-worthy with little or no regard for the praise of others, thus does not need “the approbation of other men” (TMS III.2.8). This remark seems contradictory to what we saw, but it is not. As we saw, Smith says that although “[t]he desire of the esteem and admiration of other people” is “one of the best” passions when it is due, it is not “the very best passion of human nature” (TMS VI.iii.46). Instead, Smith says, “to be that thing which deserves approbation, must always be an object of the highest” (TMS III.2.7). For him, the pure desire to do what is praise-worthy, even when there is no prospect of getting the praise of others, is “the very best passion of human nature.”

Thus, Smith classifies the self-esteem in two different ways. First, he classifies it by whether we can sympathize with it. Second, he classifies it by whether it merely seeks the praise of others or seeks to be praise-worthy. The self-esteem which merely seeks the praise of others is, as defined before, the sense of superiority. The self-esteem which seeks to be praise-worthy “is alone sufficient” and does not need “the approbation of other men” (TMS III.2.8). It is the sense of independence. While most of us would sympathize with the sense of independence, it is not always the case with the sense of superiority. As we saw, we often “sympathize with the excessive self-estimation of those splendid characters in which we observe a great and distinguished superiority above the common level of mankind.” But we do not “sympathize with the excessive self-estimation of those characters in which we can discern no such distinguished superiority” (TMS VI.iii.33).

I agree with Hume when he supports the sense of independence and philosophical tranquility, but disagree with him when he affirms a certain sense of superiority and criticizes monkish virtues. I agree with Smith when he supports the pure desire for praise-worthiness in his second classification, but disagree with him when he affirms a certain sense of superiority in his first classification and criticizes monkish virtues. I think the sense of independence desirable, but the sense of superiority not.

Irrespective of whether Hume and Smith draw a norm from human nature, from the fact that we sympathize with a certain kind and degree of the sense of superiority, it does not follow that it is desirable. First, the sense of superiority often disturbs our mind and can lead to conflicts. It always presupposes comparing oneself to others, which of-

ten produces a sense of inferiority, envy, or rivalry. Hume understands this point. He points out that pride “causes uneasiness in all men, and presents them every moment with a disagreeable comparison,” and that “’tis our own pride, which makes us so much displeas’d with the pride of other people” (T 3.3.2.7). He admits that “[s]ometimes even envy and hatred arise from the comparison” (T 3.3.2.6). Smith also suggests that the sense of superiority produces a disturbing feeling. He says, “the pleasures of vanity and superiority are seldom consistent with perfect tranquillity, the principle and foundation of all real and satisfactory enjoyment” (TMS III.3.31). Thus, the sense of superiority takes us away from true enjoyment. By contrast, a pure sense of independence, philosophical tranquility, and monkish virtues neither disturb our mind nor lead to conflicts because they do not need others’ evaluation. Second, the sense of superiority rests on a fragile basis. Hume recognizes that the sense of superiority relies on others’ evaluation when he discusses “*the love of fame*.” He says, “Our reputation, our character, our name are considerations of vast weight and importance; and even the other causes of pride; virtue, beauty and riches; have little influence, when not seconded by the opinions and sentiments of others” (T 2.1.11.1). But there is no guarantee that others will award one due evaluation. The more one seeks the sense of superiority, the more loneliness and dissatisfaction he would feel if his desire is not satisfied. Why should we care about the sentiment with such a fragile basis? In contrast, a pure sense of independence, philosophical tranquility, and monkish virtues have a firm basis because they do not rely on nor need others’ evaluation. Considering these, any kind and degree of the sense of superiority is morally inappropriate. Here, drawing a norm from human nature is morally problematic.

Hume says, “modesty, tho’ it give pleasure to every one, who observes it, produces often uneasiness in the person endow’d with it” (T 3.3.2.9). Similarly, Smith holds that if one underrates himself, he is “more unhappy in his own feelings than either the proud or the vain.” But those uneasy or unhappy feelings are different from person to person, and one can overcome such feelings. Smith also thinks that a humble person “is much more liable to every sort of ill-usage from other people” (TMS VI.iii.52). Yet this is a matter of knowledge. If one has knowledge on the ill-usage, he can avoid it.

As we saw, Hume and Smith each present two sets of morality: normal and noble one. But the moral sense or moral sentiments in their theories alone cannot distinguish between them because the moral sense or moral sentiments approve both of them. Some might argue that a noble moral sense or noble moral sentiments can distinguish noble morality from normal one. But how can we know the noble moral sense or noble moral sentiments? The appeal to them is circular. Therefore, we must appeal to something other than them to distinguish noble morality from normal one. An appeal to the normal moral sense or nor-

mal moral sentiments cannot be a solution either, not only because it is circular, but because the normal moral sense or normal moral sentiments approve normal morality, which I showed to be morally inappropriate. It follows that the moral sense or moral sentiments in Hume's and Smith's theories alone cannot identify appropriate morals even if the noble morality is morally appropriate.

### 2.5 *Sympathy and Benevolence*

We have seen that drawing norms from human nature is sometimes morally problematic. Some might argue that the is-ought problem may matter in undesirable characteristics such as anger and vengeance, but it does not matter in desirable characteristics like sympathy and benevolence. Yet even in desirable characteristics, the is-ought problem still matters because it is morally problematic to draw from human nature the extent to which we should have the desirable characteristics. Let us consider sympathy and benevolence as an example

According to James Otteson, Smith uses the term 'sympathy' in three ways. First, it means "our fellow-feeling" (TMS I.i.1.4), which "is an emotion we have that is similar to whatever emotion the person principally concerned has."<sup>18</sup> Second, it means "pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others" (TMS I.i.1.1). This is the usual meaning of the word, and a specific case of the first meaning. Third, the word "means a correspondence or harmony between the sentiments of the person principally concerned and the spectator. This usage is technical." "Sympathy in this technical sense, however, is not itself a passion: it is the 'concord' or 'correspondence' that exists between one's sentiments and those of another."<sup>19</sup> This sympathy is an integral part of moral judgment in Smith's theory. This section examines sympathy in the second sense: pity or compassion.

Smith suggests that ideally the scope of sympathy and benevolence should be universal.

Though our effectual good offices can very seldom be extended to any wider society than that of our own country; our good-will is circumscribed by no boundary, but may embrace the immensity of the universe. We cannot form the idea of any innocent and sensible being, whose happiness we should not desire, or to whose misery, when distinctly brought home to the imagination, we should not have some degree of aversion (TMS VI.ii.3.1).

Smith also says, "The wise and virtuous man" should be "willing that all those inferior interests should be sacrificed to the greater interest of the universe, to the interest of that great society of all sensible and intelligent beings" (TMS VI.ii.3.3). According to Smith, "[w]e sympathize even with the dead" (TMS I.i.1.13). These statements suggest that ideally the scope of sympathy and benevolence should be universal.

<sup>18</sup> Otteson, *Adam Smith's Marketplace of Life*, 17.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 18. For Smith's use of the terms "concord" and "correspondence," see, for example, TMS I.i.3.1, 3.

In reality, however, Smith limits the scope of benevolence to oneself, his family, friends, and country. Smith says, “the care of the universal happiness of all rational and sensible beings, is the business of God and not of man. To man is allotted a much humbler department, but one much more suitable to the weakness of his powers, and to the narrowness of his comprehension; the care of his own happiness, of that of his family, his friends, his country” (TMS VI.ii.3.6). Here the scope of benevolence does not extend to people in other countries, let alone animals. Elsewhere Smith refers to animals. He claims that “before any thing can be the proper object of gratitude or resentment, it must not only be the cause of pleasure or pain, it must likewise be capable of feeling them” (TMS II.iii.1.3). Then Smith says, “though animals are not only the causes of pleasure and pain, but are also capable of feeling those sensations, they are still far from being complete and perfect objects, either of gratitude or resentment” (TMS II.iii.1.4). This implies that there is less need to sympathize with the sufferings of animals.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Elsewhere Smith argues that meat is not necessary for our life. It may be possible to interpret this as his pity for animals being butchered. “It may indeed be doubted whether butchers meat is any where a necessary of life. Grain and other vegetables, with the help of milk, cheese, and butter, or oil, where butter is not to be had, it is known from experience, can, without any butchers meat, afford the most plentiful, the most wholesome, the most nourishing, and the most invigorating diet. Decency no where requires that any man should eat butchers meat, as it in most places requires that he should wear a linen shirt or a pair of leather shoes” (WN V.ii.k.15; cf. WN I.xi.e.29). According to Hume, our sympathy and benevolence are naturally partial. This is why he introduces a general viewpoint theory and an ideal observer theory to correct the partiality. I discuss those theories elsewhere. On animals, Hume says, “we should be bound, by the laws of humanity, to give gentle usage to these creatures, but should not, properly speaking, lie under any restraint of justice with regard to them, nor could they possess any right or property, exclusive of such arbitrary lords. Our intercourse with them could not be called society, which supposes a degree of equality; but absolute command on the one side, and servile obedience on the other” (EPM 3.18). According to Hume, “beasts are endow’d with thought and reason as well as men” (T 1.3.16.1). Both humans and animals have “pride and humility” (T 2.1.12.4; cf. T 2.1.12.9), “love and hatred” (T 2.2.12.1). “Love in animals, has not for its only object animals of the same species, but extends itself farther, and comprehends almost every sensible and thinking being” (T 2.2.12.2). “Animals are found susceptible of kindness, both to their own species and to ours” (EPM App. 2.8). Hume also points out, “*sympathy*, or the communication of passions, takes place among animals, no less than among men. Fear, anger, courage and other affections are frequently communicated from one animal to another, without their knowledge of that cause, which produc’d the original passion. Grief likewise is receiv’d by sympathy; and produces almost all the same consequences, and excites the same emotions as in our species” (T 2.2.12.6; cf. T 2.2.5.15). Hume thinks that “the will and direct passions, as they appear in animals...are of the same nature, and excited by the same causes as in human creatures” (T 2.3.9.32). On the other hand, while humans have “superior knowledge and understanding” (T 2.1.12.5), animals have “inferior strength, both of body and mind” (EPM 3.18). “As animals are but little susceptible either of the pleasures or pains of the imagination, they can judge of objects only by the sensible good or evil, which they produce, and from *that* must regulate their affections towards them” (T 2.2.12.3). Hume asks “why incest in the human species is criminal, and why the very same action, and the



Smith limits the scope of benevolence in reality because considering the universal happiness can lead to neglecting the smaller duties (TMS VI.ii.3.6). When performing the smaller duties does not seriously contradict the universal happiness, I think it is important to perform them. However, performing the smaller duties is not enough for morality.

I agree with Smith when he suggests the universal scope of sympathy and benevolence as an ideal, but disagree with him when he limits their scope in reality. As which moral sentiments we should have is essential for morality, the extent to which we should have the sentiments is also important for morality. Most people feel less sympathy for the misery of people in other countries. Most people feel less or no sympathy for animals being killed for human consumption and convenience. Irrespective of whether Smith draws a norm from human nature, from the fact that most people feel less or no sympathy for those people and animals, it does not follow that we do not need to sympathize with them strongly. Extending the scope of sympathy and benevolence is a sign of moral progress, as we have extended their scope to slaves in history. Here, drawing a norm from human nature is morally problematic.

## 2.6 Conclusion

According to one interpretation, Hume's or Smith's theory is just a description of human nature. In this case, it does not answer the question of how we ought to live. Some might ask what is wrong with just describing human nature. There is nothing wrong with it in itself. But there is a problem of whether we *should* adopt Hume's or Smith's theory as principles of morality and politics. This is a normative question, which their theories do not answer. According to another interpretation, it has some normative implications. In this case, it draws normative claims from human nature. Anyway, the sentiments of anger, resentment, vengeance, superiority, sympathy, and benevolence show that drawing norms from human nature is sometimes morally problematic. Hume's and Smith's theories are morally problematic as ethics, whether they are descriptive or normative.

From the fact that drawing norms from the moral sense or moral sentiments in Hume's and Smith's theories is sometimes morally problematic, it follows that the moral sense or moral sentiments alone

same relations in animals have not the smallest moral turpitude and deformity." Then Hume suggests that animals lack "reason sufficient to discover its turpitude," while humans have "superior reason" which serves "to discover the vice or virtue" (T 3.1.1.25). "Thus animals have little or no sense of virtue or vice; they quickly lose sight of the relations of blood; and are incapable of that of right and property" (T 2.1.12.5). Hume's description of the moral sentiment as "the sentiment of humanity" (EPM 9.5) also implies that, in his view, animals lack morality. Yet Denis Arnold argues that "Hume's discussion does open the possibility that some animals other than humans might be capable of moral activity." Denis G. Arnold, "Hume on the Moral Difference between Humans and Other Animals," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (1995): 314.

cannot identify appropriate morals. This is because of the following reason: Even if it is sometimes possible to draw appropriate morals from the moral sense or moral sentiments, some standard is necessary to distinguish between the cases where it is possible to do so and the cases where it is not. This standard must be something other than the moral sense and moral sentiments because the moral sense or moral sentiments alone cannot distinguish between the former and the latter cases. Some might claim that the moral sense or moral sentiments in the former cases can distinguish the former cases from the latter ones. But how can we know the moral sense or moral sentiments in the former cases? The appeal to them is circular. Therefore, we must appeal to something other than them. Similarly, an appeal to the moral sense or moral sentiments in the latter cases does not work either. Thus, the standard for distinguishing between the former and the latter cases must be something other than the moral sense and moral sentiments in Hume's and Smith's theories. It follows that the moral sense or moral sentiments in those theories alone cannot identify appropriate morals.

Drawing norms from human nature is sometimes morally problematic because human nature includes undesirable characteristics and constraint of desirable characteristics. At least from a moral point of view, there is no problem in drawing 'ought' from 'is' if the 'is' consists only of desirable characteristics which extend universally. Hutcheson bases morality on such 'is.' Therefore, Hutcheson's theory escapes the criticism that drawing norms from human nature is sometimes morally problematic. I will discuss this later.

### 3. *The Moral Sense and Moral Sentiments Can Change*

To support the idea that drawing norms from human nature is sometimes morally problematic, I want to show that the moral sense and moral sentiments in Hume's and Smith's theories can change over times. Smith expected to but could not establish "the natural rules of justice" (TMS VII.iv.37), that is, "general principles which are always the same" (WN IV.ii.39). Griswold points out that the study of history cannot yield such principles.

How can history yield general normative principles that are always the same? Is not the process either circular or inherently impossible? *Qua* system, the principles of natural jurisprudence would have to be complete. But as dependent on the experiential or historical, the system would have to be open-ended. Even the exact mix between the systematic and the open-ended would vary, perhaps, from one period to the next, such that we could not as theoreticians state the ideal "formula" for combining the two.<sup>21</sup>

This remark applies to normative principles that rest on the moral sense or moral sentiments. The remark implies that if the moral sense or moral sentiments can change over times, any attempt to draw unchanging normative principles from them is either circular or impos-

<sup>21</sup> Griswold, *Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment*, 257.

sible. Hume's and Smith's own writings suggest that the moral sense and moral sentiments are changeable.<sup>22</sup>

Hume suggests that the moral sense and moral sentiments are changeable. In the essay "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences," Hume proposes four general principles on the rise of the arts and sciences. First, the arts and sciences arise only where "*people enjoy the blessing of a free government.*"<sup>23</sup> Second, "*a number of neighbouring and independent states, connected together by commerce and policy*" contribute to "*the rise of politeness and learning.*"<sup>24</sup> Third, "*a republic is most favourable to the growth of the sciences, a civilized monarchy to that of the polite arts.*"<sup>25</sup> On politeness, Hume points out that gallantry is a modern invention. Fourth, "*when the arts and sciences come to perfection in any state, from that moment they naturally, or rather necessarily decline, and seldom or never revive in that nation, where they formerly flourished.*"<sup>26</sup> In the essay "Of National Characters," Hume points out a possibility that "[a] few eminent and refined geniuses will communicate their taste and knowledge to a whole people, and produce the greatest improvements."<sup>27</sup> In the essay "Of Refinement in the Arts," he argues that knowledge of government makes people mild and moderate.

Knowledge in the arts of government naturally begets mildness and moderation, by instructing men in the advantages of humane maxims above rigour and severity, which drive subjects into rebellion, and make the return to submission impracticable, by cutting off all hopes of pardon. When the tempers of men are softened as well as their knowledge improved, this humanity appears still more conspicuous, and is the chief characteristic which distinguishes a civilized age from times of barbarity and ignorance. Factions are then less inveterate, revolutions less tragical, authority less severe, and seditions less frequent. Even foreign wars abate of their cruelty; and after the field of battle, where honour and interest steel men against compassion as well as fear, the combatants divest themselves of the brute, and resume the man.<sup>28</sup>

Those principles suggest that the levels of arts, politeness, mildness, and moderation are changeable. Politeness, mildness, and modera-

<sup>22</sup> Some might argue that the moral sense or moral sentiments in Hume's and Smith's theories are constant. According to them, the seeming change of the moral sense or moral sentiments is due to something external. For example, they would claim that certain social circumstances distorted people's moral sense or moral sentiments in ancient times, but now the social circumstances which caused the distortion have disappeared. Elsewhere I show that if this may be the case, a standard different from the moral sense and moral sentiments in those theories is necessary to identify the distortion.

<sup>23</sup> Hume, *Essays*, 115.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 273–74.

tion have close relation to morality, and arts have some relation to it. Therefore, in Hume's view, the moral sense and moral sentiments are also changeable.<sup>29</sup>

Let us look at concrete examples. In the essay "Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations," Hume points out that the ancients avoided the overburden of a big family by "exposing their children in early infancy." Hume says, "This practice was very common; and is not spoken of by any author of those times with the horror it deserves, or scarcely even with disapprobation."<sup>30</sup> Yet this practice runs against the moral sense and moral sentiments of modern people. Also, the moral sense and moral sentiments of the ancients at wartime seem different from those of modern people. In the same essay, Hume writes,

In ancient history, we may always observe, where one party prevailed, whether the nobles or people (for I can observe no difference in this respect) that they immediately butchered all of the opposite party who fell into their hands, and banished such as had been so fortunate as to escape their fury. No form of process, no law, no trial, no pardon. A fourth, a third, perhaps near half of the city was slaughtered, or expelled, every revolution; and the exiles always joined foreign enemies, and did all the mischief possible to their fellow-citizens; till fortune put it in their power to take full revenge by a new revolution. And as these were frequent in such violent governments, the disorder, diffidence, jealousy, enmity, which must prevail, are not easy for us to imagine in this age of the world.<sup>31</sup>

Smith admits that the moral sentiments are changeable. He says, "The different situations of different ages and countries are apt...to give different characters to the generality of those who live in them, and their sentiments concerning the particular degree of each quality, that is either blamable or praise-worthy, vary, according to that degree which is usual in their own country, and in their own times" (TMS V.2.7). Here Smith points out that the moral sentiments vary not only across times but across countries.<sup>32</sup> Smith, like Hume, refers to infanticide in ancient times, which runs against the moral sentiments of modern people. He says, "the exposition, that is, the murder of new-born infants, was a practice allowed of in almost all the states of Greece, even among

<sup>29</sup> I admit that Hume claims elsewhere that human nature is unchangeable across places and times, which seems contradictory to this idea. For example, Hume says that humans "cannot change their natures" (T 3.2.7.6). He also remarks, "It is universally acknowledged, that there is a great uniformity among the actions of men, in all nations and ages, and that human nature remains still the same, in its principles and operations...Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular. Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature." David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp, crit. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), section 8, paragraph 7. I discuss this claim of Hume's elsewhere.

<sup>30</sup> Hume, *Essays*, 398.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 407.

<sup>32</sup> Elsewhere I discuss the variability of the moral sentiments across people, societies, and cultures.

the polite and civilized Athenians; and whenever the circumstances of the parent rendered it inconvenient to bring up the child, to abandon it to hunger, or to wild beasts, was regarded without blame or censure” (TMS V.2.15).<sup>33</sup>

People’s attitude toward slavery also suggests that the moral sense and moral sentiments are changeable. Slavery was common all over the world in the past. It existed in ancient Greece and Rome, in many European societies, in Africa, in Asia, in North and South America, and so on.<sup>34</sup> It existed “among hunter-gatherers and primitive agriculturalists,” among “the primitive Germans and Celts,...in primitive China, Japan, and the prehistoric Near East,” and among “the Indians of the northwest coast of North America.”<sup>35</sup> But slavery runs against the moral sense and moral sentiments of modern people.<sup>36</sup>

The moral sense and moral sentiments can also loosen. As Robert Putnam points out, “American attitudes toward premarital sex, for example, have been radically liberalized over the last several decades, because a generation with stricter beliefs was gradually replaced by a later generation with more relaxed norms.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, the moral sense and moral sentiments can change as time passes.

Given these, there is no guarantee that the moral sense and moral sentiments we currently have will last forever. Hume would agree on this. In the essay “Of Civil Liberty,” he suggests that human nature will change in the future. He says, “the world is still too young to fix many general truths in politics, which will remain true to the latest posterity...It is not fully known, what degree of refinement, either in virtue or vice, human nature is susceptible of; nor what may be expected of mankind from any great revolution in their education, customs, or principles.”<sup>38</sup> Hume also says, “Such mighty revolutions have happened in human affairs, and so many events have arisen contrary to the expectation of the ancients, that they are sufficient to beget the suspicion of still further changes.”<sup>39</sup> Even if all or most people currently share a certain moral sense or certain moral sentiments, that can change in the future. Therefore, any attempt to draw universal and eternal mor-

<sup>33</sup> Smith mentions this to support the idea that custom distorted the moral sentiments of the ancient Greeks. I cite this to support the idea that the moral sentiments in Smith’s sense have changed over times. Elsewhere I show that if custom may have distorted the moral sentiments, a standard different from the moral sentiments is necessary to identify the distortion.

<sup>34</sup> Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), vii, 350–64.

<sup>35</sup> Orlando Patterson, *Freedom*, vol. 1, *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 11–12.

<sup>36</sup> Hume has seemingly mutually contradictory opinions about slavery. See Hume, *Essays*, 208n, 383–84.

<sup>37</sup> Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 34.

<sup>38</sup> Hume, *Essays*, 87–88.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

als from the moral sense or moral sentiments in Hume's and Smith's theories alone is either circular or impossible.

There is no guarantee that our current moral sense and current moral sentiments are perfect. In fact, our current moral sense and current moral sentiments are such that we care more about our benefits and preferences than human and animal life and the environment. For instance, even though many people die or get serious injuries in car accidents, we do not ban cars nor set substantially low speed limits.<sup>40</sup> We let many people on earth starve to death. The abortion issue shows that, for some, human expedience is more important than human life. Our society allows killing animal for food, clothing, ornaments, and so on. Some do not care about polluting the environment and leaving serious damage to our posterity. Our current moral sense and current moral sentiments would become brutal and unacceptable if humans evolve morally in the future.

According to Griswold, by "the intellectual imagination," Smith assumes unchanging principles of human nature as the basis of ethics. Griswold says, "If the overall account convincingly shows us how the phenomena can be brought into a satisfying explanatory system when certain stable principles are posited, then of course we have good reason to accept those principles."<sup>41</sup> However, it is doubtful whether such principles exist. Even if they exist, we need to appeal to something other than the moral sense and moral sentiments to identify them because the moral sense and moral sentiments are changeable. It follows that the moral sense or moral sentiments in Hume's and Smith's theories alone cannot identify appropriate morals even if those principles are morally appropriate.

#### 4. *Hutcheson's Theory and Disinterested Benevolence*

As we have seen, drawing norms from human nature is sometimes morally problematic. This criticism applies to Hume's and Smith's theories unless the spectators in those theories are an ideal observer with such characteristics as disinterested benevolence or godlike qualities.<sup>42</sup> But Hutcheson's theory escapes the criticism because it bases morality on disinterested benevolence. In his view, disinterested benevolence is an *original* human nature.<sup>43</sup> He holds that benevolence is the universal

<sup>40</sup> From environmental and safety viewpoints, Peter Singer suggests that driving a car as we currently do is immoral. Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2.

<sup>41</sup> Griswold, *Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment*, 352.

<sup>42</sup> I discuss the ideal observer theory elsewhere.

<sup>43</sup> Hutcheson thinks 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.*" 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. He regards "disinterested

foundation of morality. He also thinks that benevolence must be disinterested. He says, "If there be any Benevolence at all, it must be disinterested; for the most useful Action imaginable, loses all appearance of Benevolence, as soon as we discern that it only flowed from Self-Love or Interest."<sup>44</sup> In Hutcheson's view, no action is moral unless it stems from disinterested benevolence. To see how his theory is different from Hume's and Smith's, let us examine Hutcheson's views on anger, revenge, pride, benevolence, and pity.

For Hutcheson, anger is "a Propensity to occasion Evil to another, arising upon apprehension of an Injury done by him."<sup>45</sup> Hutcheson mentions anger as one of the "*selfish Passions*."<sup>46</sup> Anger is the opposite of disinterested benevolence. Thus, it is not moral in his theory. Yet he points out the usefulness of anger as follows: "While the Heat of this Passion [anger] continues, we seem naturally to pursue the Misery of the injurious, until they relent, and convince us of their better Intentions, by expressing their Sense of the Injury, and offering Reparation of Damage, with Security against future Offences."<sup>47</sup> Hutcheson also says, "Our *Anger* itself is a necessary Piece of Management, by which every pernicious Attempt is made *dangerous* to its Author."<sup>48</sup>

According to Hutcheson, revenge is also one of the "*selfish Passions*."<sup>49</sup> Unlike anger, he does not mention any usefulness of revenge. In his view, revenge is "*absolutely evil*."<sup>50</sup> By contrast, he praises disinterested benevolence toward the evil. "Benevolence toward the worst Characters, or the Study of their Good, may be as amiable as any whatsoever; yea often more so than that toward the Good, since it argues such a strong Degree of Benevolence as can surmount the greatest Obstacle, the moral Evil in the Object. Hence the Love of unjust Enemys, is counted among the highest Virtues."<sup>51</sup>

While Smith bases justice on resentment, Hutcheson does not. Like Smith, Hutcheson thinks that punishing injustice is necessary for society.

'Tis also the right and duty of the system which each one should execute as he has opportunity, to assist the innocent against unjust violence, to repel

Affection" as an "Instinct, antecedent to all Reason from Interest." 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.

<sup>44</sup> Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 103.

<sup>45</sup> Hutcheson, *Essay*, 58.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>51</sup> Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 124. Hutcheson points out an exception to the benevolence to the evil. He says, "when our Benevolence to the Evil, encourages them in their bad Intentions, or makes them more capable of Mischief; this diminishes or destroys the Beauty of the Action, or even makes it evil." Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 124.



the invader, to obtain compensation of damage done, and security against like attempts for the future. Without this right all the enjoyments of men would be very precarious, since few could confide in their own strength to repel the combined forces of any cabals of the injurious. As the example of successful injuries tends to invite others to like practices, 'tis requisite for the general good that this bad influence be counteracted as often as possible, by the inflicting of such evils upon the injurious, as by their terror may overbalance in their minds, and those of others who may have like dispositions, all allurements to injustice from the hopes of secrecy and impunity. This is the foundation of the right of punishing, which, as we said above, men have in natural liberty, as well as in civil polity.

Here Hutcheson suggests that preventing injustice accompanies “evils” and “terror” (SMP II.16.IV).<sup>52</sup> Yet this passage does not say that justice rests on resentment. Elsewhere Hutcheson says, “the Intervention of moral Ideas may prevent our Hatred of the Agent, or bad moral Apprehension of that Action, which causes to us the greatest natural Evil. Thus the Opinion of Justice in any Sentence, will prevent all Ideas of moral Evil in the Execution, or Hatred toward the Magistrate, who is the immediate Cause of our greatest Sufferings.” Thus, Hutcheson distinguishes between justice and “all Ideas of moral Evil”<sup>53</sup> including resentment and vengeance, and claims that the former will prevent the latter. This passage shows that justice does not rest on resentment. Hutcheson also remarks on God’s justice: “The Justice of the Deity is only a Conception of his universal impartial Benevolence, as it shall influence him, if he gives any Laws, to attemper them to the universal Good, and inforce them with the most effectual Sanctions of Rewards and Punishments.” Although God’s justice accompanies punishment for its effectiveness, it does not stem from resentment but only from “universal impartial Benevolence.”<sup>54</sup> Since Hutcheson holds that humans originally have disinterested benevolence, his remark on God’s justice applies to humans, too.

Hutcheson distinguishes a sense of honor from the moral sense. The former “makes the *Approbation*, or *Gratitude* of others, for any good Actions we have done, the necessary occasion of Pleasure; and their *Dislike*, *Condemnation*, or *Resentment* of Injuries done by us, the occasion of that uneasy Sensation called *Shame*, even when we fear no further evil from them.”<sup>55</sup> Yet Hutcheson considers enjoying honor “really selfish,”<sup>56</sup> and points out that we dispraise pride and haughtiness.<sup>57</sup> In

<sup>52</sup> Francis Hutcheson, *A System of Moral Philosophy, in Three Books*, 2 vols. (London: A. Millar and T. Longman, 1755). The “II.16.IV” refers to book 2, chapter 16, section 4.

<sup>53</sup> Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 90–91.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>55</sup> Hutcheson, *Essay*, 18.

<sup>56</sup> Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 160.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

his view, such dispositions as humility and compassion are noble and desirable, while “*Insolence, Pride, and Contempt*” are not.<sup>58</sup>

Hutcheson extends the scope of benevolence universally. He thinks it necessary “to extend our views to the *whole Species*, or to all *sensitive Natures*, as far as they can be affected by our Conduct.”<sup>59</sup> He also writes as follows: “the Perfection of Virtue consists in ‘having the *universal calm Benevolence*, the prevalent Affection of the Mind.”<sup>60</sup> “That disposition...which is most excellent, and naturally gains the highest moral approbation, is the calm, stable, universal good will to all, or the most extensive benevolence” (SMP I.4.X). Hutcheson mentions the possibility that our benevolence extends even to “rational Agents, capable of moral Affections, in the most distant Planets.”<sup>61</sup> Hutcheson supports “universal Benevolence”<sup>62</sup> as opposed to partial benevolence. He says, “All Benevolence, even toward a Part, is amiable, when not inconsistent with the Good of the Whole: But this is a smaller Degree of Virtue, unless our Beneficence be restrain’d by want of Power, and not want of Love to the Whole.”<sup>63</sup>

Hutcheson claims that our kindness and pity extend even to animals. He remarks, “There’s indeed implanted in men a natural kindness and sense of pity, extending even to the Brutes, which should restrain them from any cruelty toward them which is not necessary to prevent some misery of mankind” (SI II.V.II).<sup>64</sup> Hutcheson also says, “Tis plainly inhuman and immoral to create to brutes any useless torment, or to deprive them of any such natural enjoyments as do not interfere with the interests of men” (SMP II.6.III).<sup>65</sup>

Yet Hutcheson does not blame the use of animals for human convenience and consumption. In his view, tractable animals fit for labor provide their labor in exchange for our care and protection. Also, he says, “Such tractable [speechless] animals as are unfit for labours, must make compensation to men for their defence and protection some other way, since their support too requires much human labour.” According to Hutcheson, this compensation includes their milk, wool, or hair (SI II.V.II). The compensation even includes some of their lives. He says,

<sup>58</sup> Hutcheson, *Essay*, 127.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>61</sup> Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 114.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 126. Hutcheson’s ideas introduced in this paragraph also appear in Noriaki Iwasa, “Sentimentalism and Metaphysical Beliefs,” *Prolegomena* 9, no. 2 (2010): 281–82.

<sup>64</sup> Francis Hutcheson, *Philosophiae Moralis Institutio Compendiaria, with A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, ed. Luigi Turco (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2007). The “II.V.II” refers to book 2, chapter 5, section 2.

<sup>65</sup> Aaron Garrett argues that the idea of animal rights originates in Hutcheson’s philosophy. See Aaron Garrett, “Francis Hutcheson and the Origin of Animal Rights,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 45, no. 2 (2007).

“It would be the interest of an animal system that the nobler kinds should be increased, tho’ it diminished the numbers of the lower.” He claims that by killing animals for food, “men are engaged to make their lives easier and to encourage their propagation. They are defended and fed by human art, their numbers increased, and their deaths may be easier” (SMP II.6.IV). Hutcheson also writes,

if upon the increase of mankind they were so straitened for food, that many must perish by famine, unless they feed upon the flesh of brute animals; Reason will suggest that these animals, slaughtered speedily by men for food, perish with less pain, than they must feel in what is called their natural death; and were they excluded from human protection they must generally perish earlier and in a worse manner by hunger, or winter-colds, or the fury of savage beasts. There’s nothing therefor of injustice or cruelty, nay ’tis rather prudence and mercy, that men should take to their own use in a gentler way, those animals which otherways would often fall a more miserable prey to lions, wolves, bears, dogs, or vultures.

Considering “the interest of the whole animal system,” Hutcheson insists on the “*right* of mankind to take the most copious use of inferior creatures, even those endued with life” (SI II.V.III).

Let me criticize Hutcheson’s remarks on how to treat animals. First, he neglects the happiness of animals destined for slaughter. Humans may be happy by killing animals because they get food. So may animals not destined for slaughter because they continue to get human care and protection. However, animals destined for slaughter are not happy, regardless of the rationale for the slaughter. Second, humans do not have the right to kill animals. Even if humans are nobler than animals, it does not follow that humans have the right to kill animals. Rather, the nobler have a responsibility to take care of the lower as best as they can. Even if one has no other choice but to kill an animal for his survival, killing it is not “mercy” (SI II.V.III), but an unfortunate event.

Despite the specific remarks on how to treat animals, Hutcheson’s theory clearly extends our benevolence and pity beyond what Smith’s realistic advice suggests. Hutcheson’s theory is morally more appropriate than Hume’s and Smith’s because it bases morality on disinterested benevolence. Then is the presence of disinterested benevolence enough for morality? More generally, is the presence of some sentiment enough for morality? The next section examines those issues.

## 5. *Sentiments Are Not Enough for Morality*

Hutcheson holds that disinterested benevolence is the universal foundation of morality. In his view, an action is moral if we perceive disinterested benevolence in it. Yet the presence of disinterested benevolence is not enough for morality. Hutcheson himself admits this. He says, “when our Benevolence to the Evil, encourages them in their bad Intentions, or makes them more capable of Mischief; this diminishes or destroys the Beauty of the Action, or even makes it evil.”<sup>66</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 124.

There is more evidence that disinterested benevolence is not enough for morality. Let us consider child education. Love for children can take various forms. Some might excessively indulge a child, while others discipline a child moderately. Both ways of treatment can come out of love. Yet excessive indulgence can ruin the child. To avoid this, one needs to know the nature of children, namely, “The child is father of the man.” Thus, one needs to have proper knowledge to act properly, and having benevolence is not enough. The same applies to other types of education including spiritual education. In Plato’s *Apology*, Socrates claims that wisdom, truth, and “the best possible state of your soul” are “the most important things,” while “wealth, reputation and honors” are “inferior things.”<sup>67</sup> But if one does not know specifically how to perfect the soul, merely having benevolence may not help. As in the child education example, an action arising from benevolence can have a negative effect on perfecting the soul if one does not understand the nature of the soul.<sup>68</sup> Ancient Chinese thinker Confucius remarks, “To love humanity and not to love learning—the latent defect is foolishness.”<sup>69</sup> Disinterested benevolence is not enough for morality.

Other sentiments are not enough for morality either. Let us examine sympathy, self-control, duty, and fairness which James Wilson regards as universal moral dispositions. On sympathy, let us think about child and spiritual education. An action arising from sympathy with a nagging child can indulge and ruin him. Similarly, an action arising from sympathy can have a negative effect on perfecting the soul if one does not understand the nature of the soul. To avoid these, one needs to know the nature of children or the soul. Thus, sympathy is not enough for morality. On self-control, it can exist not only in moral actions but in so-called immoral actions. For example, gangsters may faithfully obey their boss and strictly follow the law of gangsters to engage in crime. Self-control is necessary for these actions. As this shows, self-control is not enough for morality. On duty, it can exist not only in moral actions but in so-called immoral actions. Again, let us think about child education. If one believes that it is his duty to give whatever a child wants,

<sup>67</sup> Plato, “Apology,” in *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 29e–30a. The pagination is that of the Stephanus edition.

<sup>68</sup> For example, there is a view that pain and suffering exist for our moral and spiritual development. Contemporary philosopher and theologian John Hick supports this view in his soul-making theodicy. See John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 253–61; John Hick, “An Irenaean Theodicy,” in *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*, ed. Stephen T. Davis (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001). If the view is true, helping someone merely escape pain and suffering can slow down or stop his spiritual development. For his spiritual development, it is important to help and encourage him to overcome the pain and suffering in the right way.

<sup>69</sup> Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius (Lun Yu)*, trans. Chichung Huang (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), book 17, chapter 7. Some versions put it into book 17, chapter 8.

the duty can ruin the child. Wilson himself admits that duty does not always produce moral actions. He says, “duty—being faithful to obligations—will sometimes incline us to tell the truth even when the truth hurts and to keep promises even when honesty is a bad policy.”<sup>70</sup> These show that duty is not enough for morality.

Fairness is also not enough for morality because what one feels fair can vary according to his beliefs. In *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls considers it unfair that people should enjoy a better life merely because they won the natural lottery, for example, they were born into wealthy family or have certain “natural talents and abilities.”<sup>71</sup> But from the perspective of karma, what Rawls thinks unfair becomes fair. According to *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, karma is “the force whereby right and wrong actions bring benefits and punishments in this or a future existence. This occurs not arbitrarily, but by law.”<sup>72</sup> Positive or negative karma piled up in one’s past lives explains his circumstances and natural stature. If one is suffering in this life, that is due to negative karma piled up in his past lives. But it is possible for one with negative karma to struggle against his bad inheritance and live a righteous life, piling up positive karma. Also, it is possible for one with positive karma to waste his good inheritance by living a sinful life. According to Bruce Reichenbach, the metaphysical presuppositions of the law of karma are the following:

1. All actions for which we can be held morally accountable and which are done out of desire for their fruits have consequences.
2. Moral actions, as actions, have consequences according to the character of the actions performed: right actions have good consequences, wrong actions bad consequences.
3. Some consequences are manifested immediately or in this life, some in the next life, and some remotely.
4. The effects of karmic actions can be accumulated.
5. Human persons are reborn into this world.<sup>73</sup>

From the perspective of karma, what Rawls considers unfair becomes fair. Thus, what one feels fair can vary according to his beliefs. To know true fairness, one needs to know at least whether the law of karma exists. As this shows, fairness is not enough for morality.

To identify appropriate morals, one needs to have at least relevant knowledge of the true nature of reality. There are no sentiments the presence of which alone makes any action moral. Those who object to this claim need to show the existence of such a sentiment.

<sup>70</sup> James Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense* (New York: Free Press, 1993), 99.

<sup>71</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 63.

<sup>72</sup> *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. 2nd ed., s.v. “karma.”

<sup>73</sup> Bruce R. Reichenbach, *The Law of Karma: A Philosophical Study* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 13–23.

## 6. Conclusion

From the perspective of the is-ought problem, I showed that the moral sense or moral sentiments in the three theories alone cannot identify appropriate morals. According to one interpretation, Hume's or Smith's theory is just a description of human nature. In this case, it does not answer the question of how we ought to live. According to another interpretation, it has some normative implications. In this case, it draws normative claims from human nature. Anyway, the sentiments of anger, resentment, vengeance, superiority, sympathy, and benevolence show that drawing norms from human nature is sometimes morally problematic. The changeability of the moral sense and moral sentiments in Hume's and Smith's theories supports this idea. Hutcheson's theory is morally more appropriate because it bases morality on disinterested benevolence. Yet disinterested benevolence is not enough for morality. There are no sentiments the presence of which alone makes any action moral.

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