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Kant and Hume: Crossroads of Humanity

Introduction

Kant's formula of humanity in the *Groundwork* and Hume's framework of sympathy illustrate in a sophisticated way the capacities, tendencies, and values of human beings. This paper will first give an account of the moral theory founded upon sympathy provided by David Hume, one of the foremost interlocutors and influences on Kant, and then proceed to investigate the similarity between Kant's normative implications regarding the formula of humanity and the prescriptive actions recommended by the Humean moral system. Although Hume and Kant held firmly opposing views on the metaethical level and Hume did not explicitly use Kant's terminology, Hume puts forth a similar recommendation for the treatment of humanity in practice–to treat both others and oneself as an end, rather than a means–situated upon the discussion of sympathy in both his early and late works. Thus, on the first-order normative level, Humean sympathy acts as an intricate mechanism that produces similar effects which are in some respects equivalent to those recommended by Kant's famous illustrations of the categorical imperative's second formulation.

Section 1: Constructing and Reorienting Sympathy

The Moral Sense School, championed by Francis Hutcheson and David Hume, sought to derive moral principles from moral feeling or sentiment, while Kant postulated that the fundamental basis of morality is pure reason. Despite their differences, Kant and his Scottish counterparts agree that the fundamental ground of moral principles and motivation clearly does not concern self-interest, as others such as Mandeville and Hobbes propose. This section will focus on Hume's sentimentalist approach to moral philosophy, specifically within *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), and the following section will add to that account with his later text *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751). While Hutcheson appeals to the feeling of moral approbation or disapprobation, based on evidence of disinterested benevolent intention (or lack thereof), as a fundamental fact which is shared universally among human beings, Hume's project takes a further step by examining the origin of this moral approbation, which is namely sympathy.

On a reading of Hume's *Treatise*, sympathy seems to be *prima facie* analogous to causal inference. Take the classic example of the patient in a surgery theater (3.3.1.7). Although the observer does not have the first-person access to the subjective experiences of the patient, when the patient squirms and cries in terror from terrible surgical instruments, the observer is able to make an inference based on the observed external behavior or effects and impute an experience, in this case pain, onto the observed patient. This inference involves an act of projection, where one imagines oneself within the situation of the other. Hume then derives the general definition of sympathy from these examples as "the conversion of an idea into an impression" (3.3.2.5). This discussion in Book Three is based on the discussion of pride and the double relation of impressions and ideas regarding indirect passions in Book Two, where ideas are more weakly

imagined copies of impressions, while those said impressions are sense-perceptions and sentiments which have greater vivacity and thus acquire motivating force. In the example of the surgery patient, the observer gains an idea via the imagination from the pain behavior of the patient which is then converted into an impression, which has stronger emotional force, and produces uneasiness. Similar to a virus or contagion, sympathy at its core is an act of communication by the indirect transference of passions. This basic mechanism seems to provide a fair framework grounded in empirical evidence.

However, the moral concept of sympathy possesses further complexity than immediate sympathy based on perception. What are we to make of this particular fellow-feeling in morality, one which seems to be a unique attribute of human beings? Hume notices two potential objections dealing with the variance of sympathy based on relations (i.e. proximity) and his famous assertion that "Virtue in rags is still virtue" (3.3.1.19). He solves the variance issue by introducing the concept of the general point of view. Sympathy may appear to vary between strangers of foreign countries and acquaintances, but people are able to form a universal standpoint, and correct this bias upon careful reflection (3.3.1.14). This universal point of view is what makes conversation possible and enables shared judgements in the form of a firm, general standard of moral evaluation. The second objection regarding incapacitated virtue is resolved when Hume further explains the role of imagination, which "adheres to the general view of things, and distinguishes betwixt the feelings they produce, and those which arise from our particular and momentary situation." (3.3.1.23). Thus, the imagination separates momentary changes, such as those of fortune, and disposition. The imagination is also crucial since although sympathy may fail to influence our judgment, as other influences like self-interest can override it, it is nevertheless a very salient principle of human nature, for sympathy always affects the

imagination (3.3.1.20). Therefore, in practice, the tension between extensive sympathy and limited generosity is resolved.

Moreover, on the first-order normative level, although sympathy appears to be the medium through which moral evaluation is made, underlying this standard of normative judgment is a key insight on humanity. Hume appeals to the human connectedness inherent in the nature of the human condition as what makes sympathy so remarkable. This observation stems from a simple fact about human nature: within every person there is the "most ardent desire for society" (2.2.5.15). In other words, the human being was born for society. Hume suggests that the greatest punishment is "perfect solitude," and indeed, the position and relation between one human being and others have abundant and direct influences on the concepts of morality and selfhood. Perhaps one can never know oneself without the aid of others. For instance, pride, ambition, and a whole host of other passions all find their animating principle within sympathy, for one comes to learn and experience the complexity of such passions through sympathetic communication (2.2.5.15). These passages contain powerful implications if Hume's position is to be viewed from a more metaphysical angle. As previously established, sympathy is what allows for mutual understanding, for the "sentiments of others can never affect us, but by becoming, in some measure, our own" (3.3.2.3). Sympathy allows for the border between selfhood and otherness to be put in a tenuous position, where the pain of another inexplicably becomes the pain of the self.

When we consider the idea of others being crucial for the self, since human beings are in a sense connected by bridges of sympathy, it then makes solid sense to adopt the universal standpoint and relinquish our potentially differing judgments. This action is done for the sake of society, for as mentioned previously, if everyone possessed conflicting views all the time,

conversation and order would be out of reach. There are several interesting implications from the insight that human beings are mutually dependent and bridge-like. On the macro-level, perhaps the ideal society is one governed by a complex form of sympathy, where all agents realize and act upon the part of their innate nature which is fundamentally and harmoniously interconnected with others all the time. On a more individual level, the need for others within humans has much explanatory power in understanding the natural human tendency to desire to conform with certain groups or society as a whole, both in practice and history.

Another reason why Hume praises the concept of sympathy as unparalleled "in itself and its consequences" is its ability for human beings to make each other complete in terms of satisfaction and happiness (2.1.11.2). Sympathy is a close correspondence of human souls, and alongside the formation of the general point of view, the existence and stability of society rests upon it. Albeit artificial, the society of others in some form is a necessary condition for happiness. For instance, Hume envisions a person with the power to make the sun rise and fall, to create abundance upon earth. But, this being will be wholly miserable until there is at least one other person to confide in and share friendship with (2.2.5.15). Thus, the misery of the solitary man demonstrates the crucial interconnected nature of human existence. Even hermits must have come from another, having been influenced by others in some way and projecting human-like qualities upon non-human entities. It appears that although a person can theoretically live in a purely solitary mode, in practice, it is unfulfilling and miserable, for human beings were not designed to be alone from both a biological and philosophical standpoint. One can have the greatest, most divine powers, yet still be utterly miserable if they are doomed to roam the world alone. Perhaps the feeling of completeness and satisfaction within an individual must involve in some meaningful form other human beings. If one is to examine sympathy in light of these

passages, it becomes clear that the most ardent desire for society and sympathy are closely bound together. The minds of men are mirrors, powerfully capable of reflecting and seeing what cannot be seen without external aid (2.2.5.21). Thus, the fundamental connectedness of humanity is what enables sympathy to be so firm and powerful a standard and origin for moral distinctions.

However, in the earlier discussion on the artificial virtue of justice, there seems to be a contradictory view towards this idea of fundamental human connectedness. Hume argues in this section that the original motivation of justice arises from education and custom rather than public benevolence, and he proceeds to state that "there is no such passion in human minds, as the love of mankind, merely as such, independent of personal qualities, of services, or of relation to ourself" (3.2.1.12). Although this passage may appear to be a counterexample to the aforementioned sections in Book Two, Hume does not have fanciful ideas that a strong universal affection for all people exists independently, for in practice, with all the complicated biases in human nature, that is clearly not the case. The relation to the self is a crucial part of sympathy, for it is in mediation to the self that one possesses the ardent desire for society and ability to re-constructively experience the otherwise inaccessible phenomenology of others. The interest of one person in humankind, or the good of the whole in Hutchesonian terms, does not exist in isolation as a given. Consequently, while Hume recognizes that there is no independent universal affection for mankind, that is not mutually exclusive with the observation that individuals are nonetheless fundamentally invested in humankind due to natural sympathy.

In general, in order to arrive at a better-formed assessment of Hume's treatment of sympathy, there therefore needs to be a discussion regarding Hume's typical approach and the project of philosophy within the *Treatise.* Some of the apparent contradictory statements within Hume's moral corpus need more context outside of a single quotation, for Hume tends to operate

in quite the cumulative, potentially confusing way. Simon Blackwell elegantly expresses this sentiment when he states, “Hume is well aware that we are contrary beings, as well as short-sighted, hard-hearted, jealous, envious, and all the rest. There is only a small particle of dove mingled in with the wolf and the serpent. Life is a constant exercise of balance and compromise” (Oxford 431). Hume seems to be in this balancing act between the precision of practical examples of morality and cohesive uniformity of abstract moral principles. There are those in society who are capable of horrendous things, and others who perform altruistic acts of charity or benevolence — and Hume is well aware of this diversity within the human condition. The absence of a passion for the love of mankind does not rule out the conclusions which can be drawn from what Hume observed about the ardent desire for society and the miserable solitary superhuman. If one is to fixate on these surface-level minor contradictions, the most fruitful ideas and observations will then become neglected. Therefore, the interwoven nature of human existence and morality (founded upon the capacity for sympathetic communication) still holds as one of the key insights related to Hume’s account of sympathy.

But, this usage of Hume’s practical and anatomical approach to philosophy is not meant to be a simple alternative way to bypass controversial disagreements, perhaps most notably involving the tension between how the idea of self is used in his framework of sympathy in moral philosophy versus his metaphysics and epistemology. Contemporary philosophers such as Philip Mercer in *Sympathy and Ethics* (1972) rightly point out the flaws within Hume’s framework of sympathy. Mercer asserts that Hume’s theory of sympathy is fundamentally unsatisfactory, partly due to its natural prejudice and blindness to value (1). However, rather than focusing on issues within the Humean moral system, it is in a sense more constructive and helpful to invest attention onto the underlying ideas identified by Hume’s theory of sympathy.

What matters more is not the infallibility of a theory's content, but rather, the concepts which the theory brings to light. Hume recognizes this in his conclusion to Book Three when he adds a parenthetical note to his declaration that all people are "lovers of virtue", stating cautiously, "and such we all are in speculation, however we may degenerate in practice" (3.3.6.3). No matter how much one speculates and abstracts into the realm of moral principles, the practical application and playing out of those principles may and will frequently diverge in reality. Even when drawing conclusions about the source of moral distinctions, Hume shows his practical approach by recognizing the inadequate and contingent nature of speculation when he uses the term 'all'. Rather than attempting to obtain dogmatic correctness, Hume seeks to diagnose and dissect the smaller parts which comprise the picture of morality in hope for more thorough and precise understandings. For that reason, Hume is akin to an anatomist, and indeed, this rigorous scientific spirit of endeavoring to grasp a clearer picture, albeit sometimes hideous, provides a powerful model for that of moral philosophy based on progress and practicality rather than perfection.

Section 2: Kantian Parallels

Kant famously stated that Hume awakened him from his dogmatic slumber in *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*. Indeed, Hume's philosophy contains prominent critical veins, and even Hume himself remarks that this characteristic can be easily perceived by his readers (Harris 119). Kant exhibits a similar spirit of investigation in his moral philosophy as well, and generally, the two have a more nuanced relationship beyond ideological rivalry. Although Kant criticizes Hume for deriving necessity from a method of empirical propositions (*ex pumice aquam*) in his Preface to *The Critique of Practical Reason*, he also defends Hume against various attacks accusing him of universal empiricism and skepticism of principles (5:12). Kant rightly mentions that Hume does not include mathematics within his matured system of empiricism, and thus falls short of universal empiricism and unlimited skepticism (5:13). Thus, although Kant disagrees with Hume on fundamental issues such as the ground for moral principles, it is clear that he feels a respect for Hume, and views his English counterpart's writing to be a valuable philosophical exercise. Kant also expresses his gratitude to Hume for his willingness to "trouble" himself with this difficult, unintuitive work (5:14). Thus, both philosophers are clearly not satisfied with a short or superficially elegant answer–Kant is more of an anatomist than a painter in regards to his rigorous analytic method.

Although Hume diverges from Kant in terms of metaethics, Hume's mechanism of sympathy is a step in the right direction to grasp a worthier conception of virtue and morality, for it goes further beneath the ground of moral approbation and introduces a new sense of rigor. In fact, sympathy also allows for one to identify the importance of human interconnectedness in developing a strong, viable moral system. In a way, Kant is continuing this lucid mission, summed up in the epigraph at the start of the Third Book of Hume's *Treatise* from Book IX of

Lucan's *Pharsalia*, where Cato says, "As a lover of austere virtue, ask what virtue is and demand [to see her] worthy presence" (Rorty 15). Kant and Hume are demanding inquirers, although they may differ in other respects. In this section, Hume's normative ethics will be compared with those of Kant's in *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1797); special focus will be given to the examination of how Hume aligns with Kant's discussion on the formula of humanity and its illustrations.

In *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant provides the second main formulation of the categorical imperative, the famous formula of humanity: "So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means" (4:429). This supreme practical principle is grounded in the fact that the human being (also extendable to all rational beings) fundamentally exists as an end in itself, and thus, can never be a means used at whim. The formula of humanity also grounds the first formulation of universal law in regards to the universalizability of maxims. Although the fundamental principle of morality is not derived from human nature, in order to obtain the specific practical duties, one must still understand human nature.

The formula of humanity is then followed by four illustrations or applications of it, the first two being negative, and the last two being positive duties. These four examples by Kant shall be used as points of comparison, where it shall be shown how Hume's framework of morality and sympathy reaches similar recommendations. For each instance, there will be a brief explanation of the illustration and then a comparison with Hume's views.

In regards to the first prohibitive duty to oneself, Kant argues that when one commits suicide, thereby destroying and harming one's own humanity, it is using their own person as a

mere means to "maintain a tolerable condition up to the end of life" (4:429). This debasing treatment which lowers humanity to the level of instrumental things is thus morally impermissible and this specific prescriptive duty adheres well by normative moral standards of the time. Although Hume is famous for his controversial essay published posthumously, "On Suicide" (1777), which argues that suicide is morally permissible, it is more so an attack on superstition and the unquestioned traditional principles of religious officials. Additionally, it remains unknown if Hume even supported the views expressed within the piece. As Beauchamp identifies rightly, Hume himself said that he never intended to publish the essay, and only did so since his publisher insisted on having more essays in order to justify the publication of a volume (95). Then, when he finally procured a more adequate essay, he immediately withdrew the essay he wrote on suicide. It is also known historically that Hume has suppressed essays before, namely an essay on geometry that was supposed to appear in his *Four Dissertations*, due to the persuasion of friends who convinced him that his arguments were defective (Beauchamp 94). Hume also recounts that a friend persuaded him to suppress his essay pertaining to suicide, and perhaps Hume was aware of the philosophically deficient and logically inconsistent nature of his arguments within the piece.

If one is to turn towards the *Treatise*, however, a different picture on protecting the humanity within oneself emerges. Within Hume's discussion on his conception of pride in Book Three, he remarks that although "an over-weaning 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" (3.3.2.8). Both Kant and Hume notice the partiality which is a relevant aspect of human nature, and Hume does so in this passage with particularly emphatic language. Hume observes that people indeed have a strong tendency to treat their own humanity

as an end (and it is disagreeable if it is treated as the only end and at the expense of others being treated as means), and thus, the act of self-destruction as a general maxim would be morally impermissible under his framework as well. Sympathy is also particularly relevant in this picture, since the passion of pride is made possible through it, and thus, it is natural that self-esteem or pride, founded by sympathy, is averse to self-destruction and favors the recommendation to treat humanity within oneself as an end. A similar observation is also prominent within his *Second Enquiry*, a later work written more than a decade after, where he cites within the Fourth Appendix a quote by Eurpides: "I hate a wise man, says the Greek poet, who is not wise to himself" (A4.15). Certainly this reference to the tragedian Euripides suggests that Hume encourages the treatment of the humanity in oneself as an end. Thus, in multiple ways, the Humean system of morality on the normative level does agree with the practical recommendation Kant gives regarding the duty of omission regarding suicide.

To expand on this comparison in the other direction, Kant identifies a partiality to self similar to what we find in Hume, which is integral in morality. For this reason, after the Formulation of Universal Law, Kant recommends the cultivation of one's talents, "For, as a rational being he necessarily wills that all the capacities in him be developed. Since they serve him and are given to him for all sorts of possible purposes" (4:423). Moreover, in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, there is the discussion of a two-pronged approach to the end of self-perfection: the cultivation of one's natural capacities of mind and body. If one is to accept this idea that the human being by definition is a being capable of setting their own ends, it logically follows that in order to will an end, one first needs to will means to that end (4:417). If the means are not available to an individual, then they cannot rationally will an end, and thus, refraining from cultivating one's mental and physical capacities will restrict and dampen the range of ends

a person can set for themselves. It follows that it is crucial for one to develop the means that make possible the setting of ends, for humanity is the capacity to set one's own ends, according to Kant. Thus, although self-love has nothing to do with the fundamental principle of morality for Kant or Hume, both thinkers recognize that some form of self-interest is a way that the recommendation for the treatment of one's own humanity as an end actualizes itself within reality.

Kant's second example is the duty to not defraud others, that is, to not make promises that one has no intention of keeping, since doing so effectively makes use of other humans as mere means and trangresses upon the status of rational beings as ends (4:430). Similarly, sympathy in Hume recommends to an individual that they should not defraud others, for it is clear that the victim's distress in a vicious case of massive property fraud would lead to the feeling of moral disapprobation within an impartial, disinterested observer. One is capable of saying that an enemy city's fortifications looks awe-inspiring, and in this case, one can also feel an insuppressible feeling of moral displeasure when fraud occurs (3.3.1.23). Thus, sympathy upon careful reflection is indeed a reliable indicator for what is morally praiseworthy and vice versa.

Additionally, the social aspect of sympathy would lead to the discouragement of fraud, since on a more general level, fraud is detrimental to the stability and harmony of society. Sympathy plays an important role here since it interests people in the good of humankind and society, for at least within the Humean moral system, the "public good is indifferent to us, except so far as sympathy interests us in it" (3.3.6.1). In relation to Kant, who refers to this illustration as a duty to others, Hume also recognizes that although sympathy only occasionally impacts judgment, for other influences can override it, the individual is always recommended to not

defraud others, for sympathy always affects the imagination. Perhaps concepts of duty are derived from the mind, and thus, the duty would always hold within the imagination, although it may not in practice. In other terms, Hume recognizes that it does not follow that pleasures and pains from sympathy motivate us all the time, but, they will have their voice heard, if sometimes only faintly, in our practical inclinations (3.3.1.23). Thus, although one may choose not to follow the prescription of not defrauding another, it is nevertheless urged by Humean sympathy to treat the humanity of others as ends in this specific scenario, the same recommendation as Kant.

The third illustration regarding harmonizing one's action with one's humanity is particularly interesting when put within a practical context. Kant contends that it is not sufficient for one to act in avoidance of actions which conflict with humanity within oneself, and that one must harmonize their actions with humanity, for "there are in humanity predispositions to greater perfection" (4:430). To act in a way in which you treat the humanity in oneself as an end requires one to further that end, and thus is a commissive duty which entails a positive aspect instead of merely avoiding actions which conflict with the formulation of humanity. It is uncertain whether such a duty could ever be completely fulfilled, but attempting to approach perfection is a continual, life-long task.

Hume's discussion of humanity also brings up similar themes of the greater potentials of human nature which we are predisposed to via the propensity of sympathy. This harmonizing with actions is valuable when we consider the great force of sympathy and ardent desire for society. Hume appeals to "the benevolent principles of our frame" in engaging people with social virtues and how, "these principles of humanity and sympathy enter so deeply into all our sentiments, and have so powerful an influence, as may enable them to excite the strongest censure and applause" (5.45). Thus, if one were to only avoid conflict with the formula of

humanity and not act positively, sympathy would cause a unique sense of discomfort and uneasiness within the individual.

The strongest praise and blame not only apply to the judgment of others, but also the judgment of the self. After all, sympathy enters deeply into all sentiments. Hume recognizes the importance of harmonizing with the end of humanity within oneself when he asks rhetorically,

> "who can think any advantage of fortune a sufficient compensation for the least breach of the social virtues, when he considers…his peace and inward satisfaction entirely depend upon his strict observance of them, and that a mind will never be able to bear its own survey, that has been wanting in its part to mankind and society?" (3.3.6.6)

Indeed, Hume concludes on a powerful note in Book III, Part III when he emphasizes the importance of harmonizing one's actions with humanity and virtue. However, instead of grounding this human tendency within the categorical imperative as Kant does, Hume utilizes the idea of conscience or survey of mind which is grounded by sympathy and the most ardent desire for society. A mind which has been wanting to be a part of humankind will apply the judgments of others and society onto itself, via sympathy. When the feeling of disdain from others becomes one's own, an internal disdain is generated in the morally blameworthy individual. When one disinterestedly surveys the actions and character of men, one likewise surveys oneself as a part of that whole (3.3.5.6).

Perhaps this observation implies an otherness in the mind of one's own person since conscience and feelings of guilt which arise from it are potent due to sympathy which gives vivacity to the feelings of others and, by extension, society. There is thus a kind of social judgment when conscience operates within oneself. Hume recognizes this social aspect when he remarks that, "the party of human kind" has the common enemy of vice, and therefore, society is hostile to such types of disorder (9.9). For this reason, what makes Kant's third duty so

interesting when applied to Hume is the human need to be connected with others, and the power of sympathy as an animating principle of the passions allows for this duty to provide tremendous rewards when met and punishments when neglected. Not only is inner tranquility contingent upon this duty, but also, one's own existence is challenged and demeaned when said duty is not followed, for the mind would be incapable of bearing its own survey. One can hide deeds from others, but the internal omniscience of the mind's eye, no matter how hard one may attempt to repress or ignore it, is a powerful aspect of moral psychology. Thus, within Hume's thought, harmonizing one's actions with the furtherance of humanity (and its greater perfections) within oneself is crucial for inner satisfaction and peace due to this survey of the mind, which is largely founded upon sympathy.

The fourth and final illustration of the formula of humanity concerns promoting the happiness of others. Kant states how, "The ends of a subject who is an end in itself must as far as possible be also my ends, if that representation is to have its full effect in me" (4:430). If one is to accept Kant's view that the natural end of a human being is their own happiness, in the ideal scenario where all people follow the fourth duty, everyone would then try to further the ends, or happiness, of others as much as possible. As a result, the happiness of everyone, including oneself, would be covered.

Of course, there are more complexities within Kant's account of happiness, but they will be limited to a few remarks below. Happiness is a second-order desire because it is contingent upon the satisfaction of first-order desires, which in turn have to be mutually consistent and coherent. There are scenarios where one's happiness may be much different than another's, notwithstanding being completely incompatible, but generally, happiness is the long-term satisfaction of first-order desires or ends, which are prone to constant variability. Some desires

may be deferred or eliminated, but practically, there is always a problem as to how to balance first-order desires and happiness in a way in which the freedom of others are not infringed upon.

Hume also clearly endorses the commitment of an individual to the happiness of others, for it is sympathy that concerns one with the well-being of others. The passions are so contagious that "they pass with the greatest facility from one person to another, and produce correspondent movements in all human breasts" (3.3.3.5). In a way, one is infected by the sentiments of others, moved by the passions of others. It then follows that one should satisfy the happiness of others, for virtue is both its own reward in the imagination and pays in dividends in regards to the feeling of moral approbation. In their treatment of others, Hume and Kant both recognize the interconnected nature of society and humanity which enables the investment of one into the happiness of others.

Regarding the four duties as a whole, they provide a useful, encompassing picture of the formula of humanity's application on the normative level. As demonstrated above, Hume makes similar recommendations based on sympathy and its complexities, and thus, Hume and Kant coincide strongly on the first-order normative level, in regards to the actual practical application of moral principles. The rest of this section will aim to illuminate the structure of duty and its applications to the four duties in an effort to defend these illustrations against potential counterexamples, and finally, the last comparison between Hume and Kant will be made regarding the practical yet optimistic dimension present within both their moral philosophies.

Although it may be easy to interpret Kant as unrealistic in postulating that the ends of another human should be the ends of oneself, in the second part of *The Metaphysics of Morals*, "The Doctrine of Virtue", Kant introduces a crucial distinction between perfect and imperfect duties which resolves this tension. Although it would be ideal for a person to completely realize

virtue in their lifespan, it is in practice unattainable. On a similar line of thought, no one person can fully realize or possibly know what would make for the happiness of everyone else, and thus, this duty of aiding others in fulfilling their happiness is an imperfect duty. Imperfect duties fall under the two main categories: self-perfection and the fulfillment of the happiness of others. Kant makes it clear that the duty of a human being to increase the former, which is in part their moral perfection, is "wide and imperfect in terms of its degree, because of the frailty (*fragilitas*) of human nature. It is a human being's duty to strive for this perfection, but not to reach it (in this life)" (6:446). This view is extendable to the happiness of others as well, since although the duty is perfect in regards to its object, it is imperfect in regards to its subject. The human being is simply limited in capacity and lifespan. In light of this distinction of imperfect duties, the fourth duty when applied in a practical sense consists of the recommendation that one should help other people attain their ends within their power and what is possible for them upon careful reflection. The third duty would also be a commissive duty of similar nature to the fourth. This is contrasted with perfect duties, which are fully realizable and would include all duties of omission, such as the first and second duty mentioned in *The Groundwork*, pertaining to suicide and fraud. Thus, potential objections to the impracticality of the third and fourth maxim are dealt with and anticipated by Kant.

Moreover, although this distinction and treatment of humanity may seem to reflect a pessimistic tone, such a characterization would be misleading. The optimism and practicality within both Kant and Hume contain perhaps some of their most attractive, relatable, and accessible passages. Much like Hume, Kant sometimes exhibits a practical side which is incorporated with his idealist background, but his philosophy of humanity is what provides an overwhelming sense of optimism. Although Kant does recognize that, "All duties to oneself

regarding the end of humanity…[are] only imperfect duties", in previous passages, there resides a more positive, empowering account of his concept of humanity based on potential rather than impossibility (6:447). Within Section X of the "Introduction to the Doctrine of Virtue", Kant comments how, "Virtue so shines as an ideal that it seems, by human standards, to eclipse holiness itself, which is never tempted to break the law" (6:397). Indeed, virtue is a light-giver and source of hope to humanity and society as a whole, and Hume would agree as well regarding the importance of virtue, albeit not from a rationalist perspective. Both philosophers are passionate defenders of virtue, for Hume also praises the "dignity of virtue" which his moral system exhibits (3.3.6.6). In the case of Hume, however, all moral distinctions of vice and virtue are founded upon sympathy. For example, upon the first creation of society, the rules of justice become "immutable" since justice is founded upon the greatest conceivable interest, original "instincts" (3.3.6.5). It is from this sympathy with humankind and ardent desire for society that justice becomes a noble, steadfast virtue.

Most importantly, this statement on the ideal of virtue from Kant within Section X of the Introduction is then followed by a footnote which cites a line from the poem "Über die Ursprung des Übels" by Albrecht von Haller, where he writes, "Man with all his faults / Is better than a host of angels without will" (6:397). This extraordinary dignity and greatness of humanity lies within the ability to will, and Kant rightly identifies the idea that human beings are ends in virtue of their capacity of freedom, that is, to set their own ends. Even as far back as Hutcheson in *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1726), one can find a moving optimism in humanity. After his mathematical derivation of benevolence as equating to the moment of good divided by an individual's ability, Hutcheson remarks how,

> "no external Circumstances of Fortune, no involuntary Disadvantages, can exclude any Mortal from the most heroick Virtue…For how small soever the

> Moment of publick Good be, which any one can accomplish, yet if his Abilitys are proportionably small, the Quotient, which expresses the Degree of Virtue, may be as great as any whatsoever" (136).

It is remarkable that within Hutcheson's concept of benevolence, no person is excluded from the capacity of virtue, and it is within these empowering observations, that any human can will the greatest virtue, which human beings are set apart from angels who cannot will.

Hutcheson's successor in the Scottish Enlightenment, Hume, also puts virtue above all else within his framework. Hume marvels at how "little is requisite to supply the necessities of nature?" and suggests that the natural pleasure of virtue is incomparable to "the feverish, empty amusements of luxury and expense" (9.25). And this virtue is priceless, for there is a fundamental satisfaction when the duties of virtue are followed, which Kant derives from the formula of humanity, which makes it so that virtues are "below all price in their attainment, and above it in their enjoyment" (9.25). The potentiality of all humanity to treat themselves and others as ends is empowering enough, and Kant recognizes that continually progressing in commissive positive duties, such as aiding others' happiness as much as possible without infringing upon oneself or others, is practically the most a single individual can do. Yet, in regards to the object of the duty, it is indeed perfect, for the ideal of virtue presents a strong, eclipsing picture of Kant's appreciation of humanity and its virtues deriving from the will despite all its many flaws.

Conclusion

Hume implicitly puts forth the same recommendations as Kant on the normative level, namely to treat humanity within oneself as an end and to treat the humanity of others as ends, as demonstrated by the comparison made between Hume and Kant's four illustrations of the formula of humanity. While Kant grounds the appraisal of actions as duties in the formal principle expressed by the categorical imperative and its formulations, Hume relies on sympathy and the interconnectedness of human beings in order to reach the same prescriptive recommendations. In Hume's picture, the powerful principle in human nature, sympathy, not the categorical imperative, is what catalyzes the actualization of the formula of humanity. But, regardless of these concerns with metaethics and formal principles, the usefulness and extendability of the formula of humanity on the normative level reaffirms it as one of Kant's greatest contributions to moral philosophy.

Moreover, despite these differences regarding the fundamental principle of morality as well as backgrounds from varying traditions (empiricism versus rationalism), Kant and Hume both exhibit practical approaches which demonstrate the rigor of their philosophical projects. In that sense, they depart from dogmatism, constantly testing their theories with practical, anatomical, and substantive examples. Especially with Hume's concept of sympathy and the ardent desire for society as well as Kant's formulation of humanity and ideal of virtue, these frameworks lead to key realizations regarding the influence of human potentiality on moral systems. The human being is a remarkable part of a tapestry, capable of embodying the experiences of others and thus existing as constitutive parts of, in some semblance at least, an interconnected, harmonious whole. In the spirit of Kant and Hume, it is undeniable that to understand what the human being is remains as a central task pertaining to moral philosophy.

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