

## Belief and the Passions \*

### David Owen, Oct 09

One is tempted to define man as a rational animal who always loses his temper when he is called upon to act in accordance with the dictates of reason.

- Oscar Wilde

### I Background

... it seems to me certain that a great light in the intellect is followed by a great inclination in the will; so that if we see very clearly that a thing is good for us, it is very difficult - and on my view, impossible, as long as one continues in the same thought - to stop the course of our desire. (Descartes' letter to Mesland, 2 May, 1644, in The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, vol 3, pp. 233-34)

In this letter, Descartes seems to be expressing the view that a really clear grasp of the good determines the will. This grasp of the good is intellectual, not sensory, and 'the course of our desire' just is the inclination of the will. Desiring is an activity of the will. If one makes a few obvious changes, the picture that emerges is the one I would like to attribute to Hume when he speaks of the springs and activating principles of action. It is a fundamental, original principle of human nature, empirically discovered, that an impression or an idea of pleasure is frequently followed by an action

Nature has implanted in the human mind a perception of good or evil, or in other words, of pain and pleasure, as the chief spring and moving principle of all its actions. But pain and pleasure have two ways of making their appearance in the mind; of which the one has effects very different from the other. They may either appear in impression to the actual feeling and experience, or only in idea, as at

present when I mention them. 'Tis evident the influence of these upon our actions is far from being equal. Impressions always actuate the soul, and that in the highest degree; but 'tis not every idea which has the same effect. (T 1.3.10.2; SBN 118) <sup>1</sup>

In Hume, the contingent, but perfectly general, connection between pleasure and action plays the role that, in Descartes, was played by the connection, known a priori, between the perception of the good and the inclination of the will. This aspect of Hume's psychology is far more important to his overall account of motivation than his better known views on reason and the passions. Indeed, once the centrality of the influence of impressions and ideas of pleasures and pains is acknowledged, many common ways of understanding Hume's claims about the reason and the passions must be corrected.<sup>2</sup> Let's call the principle stating the link between action and pleasure the Pleasure Principle.

In order to investigate Hume on action, the will, the passions and reason, one should first think about, quite literally, what he is talking about. With the exception of 'action', all of the terms just used to demarcate the topic of this aspect of Hume's psychology are faculty terms. The faculty of the will has volitions as its product; the faculty of the passions produces the individual passions, such as hope and fear, desire, pride and hatred; while the faculty of reason is the faculty responsible for inferences or pieces of reasoning, both demonstrative and probable.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the centrality of faculty talk in Hume, he has a rather thin view of faculties.<sup>4</sup> Any appeal to faculties has to be cashed out in terms of patterns of causal connections between perceptions of the mind. An appeal to the faculty of reason or the

will has no explanatory value on its own. Suppose that a person ‘who concludes somebody to be near him, when he hears an articulate voice in the dark, reasons justly and naturally’. We do not explain the belief and its justness by saying it derives from the faculty of reason. We explain it by showing that it ‘be deriv’d from nothing but custom, which infixes and enlivens the idea of a human creature, on account of his usual conjunction with the present impression.’ (T 1.4.4.1; SBN 225) Similarly, suppose a thirsty person reaches for a glass of water. The action is not explained by citing that it was preceded by an act of will or volition which derived from the faculty of the will. It is explained by citing the person’s thirst as a painful impression of a certain sort, together with the belief that a drink from the glass of water will relieve that thirst. That is explanatory because ‘[t]he mind by an original instinct tends to unite itself with the good, and to avoid the evil’ (T 2.3.9.2; SBN 438). Such a general principle is present in most Humean explanations of action, and it can be expressed in many ways. One such way is the claim that ‘all men desire pleasure’ (T 2.1.10.8; SBN 314). It is the general link between pleasure and action that is explanatory here, not the presence of a desire.<sup>5</sup>

Here, as elsewhere, it would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of Hume’s division of the perceptions of the mind into impressions and ideas, and his Copy Principle, that ‘all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv’d from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent.’ (T 1.1.1.7; SBN 4) This principle colours virtually every major thesis put forward by Hume. Think of causal inference, the nature of belief, scepticism with regard to reason and the senses, personal identity, sympathy, the indefinability of the passions, and the complex double relation of ideas and impressions that is so distinctive of his account of the

indirect passions.<sup>6</sup> In this paper, I want to investigate a few aspects of Hume's account of reason, belief, the passions, and motivation in light of these two general principles.

One constraint that immediately arises is this: no faculty can produce a new (simple) idea. All simple ideas are derived from impressions. In particular, the faculty of reason cannot produce a new idea. This follows from the Copy Principle. And Hume is explicit about it: 'reason alone can never rise to any original idea' (T 1.3.14.5; SBN 157). See also T 1.3.6.3; SBN 88; T 1.3.14.17; SBN 164; App 4; SBN 625). Unlike many other faculties, reason cannot produce impressions either.<sup>7</sup> Reason produces inferences, and an inference always finishes with a belief (an idea) or a relation of ideas. Such ideas must always have been experienced at some earlier time as impressions. The faculty of sensation produces impressions of sensation; the faculties of the will and the passions produce secondary impressions, or impressions of reflection. The faculties of the imagination, reason, and memory produce only ideas, not impressions, though the beliefs produced by the latter two faculties are ideas with such force and vivacity that they approximate to impressions. These ideas, of course, are available to the imagination, reason, and memory only because they have been derived from previously experienced impressions.

## **II An Example**

Although this paper is primarily about reason, belief, the passions and motivation, I want to further illustrate the importance of the doctrine of impressions and ideas on these topics with a point about the beginning of Book 3 and the moral sentiments. In the advertisement for Book 3, after claiming that the book 'is in some measure independent of the other two', Hume says

It must only be observ'd, that I continue to make use of the terms, impressions and ideas, in the same sense as formerly; and that by impressions I mean our stronger perceptions, such as our sensations, affections and sentiments; and by ideas the fainter perceptions, or the copies of these in the memory and imagination. (T p. 292; SBN 455 facing)

The only thing Hume asks his new readers to bring to Book 3 is the distinction and relation between impressions and ideas. He then goes on to structure 3.1.1 in terms of that distinction:

this distinction gives rise to a question, with which we shall open up our present enquiry concerning morals, Whether 'tis by means of our ideas or impressions we distinguish betwixt vice and virtue, and pronounce an action blamable or praiseworthy? This will immediately cut off all loose discourses and declamations, and reduce us to something precise and exact on the present subject. (T 3.1.1.3; SBN 456)

It is immediately apparent that '[t]hose who affirm that virtue is nothing but a conformity to reason... concur in the opinion, that morality, like truth, is discern'd merely by ideas, and by their juxta-position and comparison' (T 3.1.1.4; SBN 456). We need to 'consider, whether it be possible, from reason alone, to distinguish betwixt moral good and evil'. Now if the idea of 'moral good' is derived from an impression, the way the idea of 'natural good' is derived from an impression of pleasure, we know in advance that it cannot come from reason alone. Reason can never produce an impression or a new idea. Those who have read Book 1 and 2 will see this right away. More discussion is required for others, and Hume proceeds to give it. The ensuing discussion (paragraphs 5-16) also

uses earlier material, concerning motivation, and we will get back to that material shortly. Only one possibility remains open to those who would find moral distinctions in reason alone. Although the faculty of reason cannot discover a new idea, it can, roughly speaking, discover a new relation of ideas. Hume argues against this possibility in the (bulk of the) rest of this section, paragraphs 17-25. Paragraph 26 segues into the discussion, found in 3.3.2, of moral distinctions being derived from sentiments. Interestingly, Hume does not here directly argue that the impression from which virtue (or vice) is derived is not a sense impression but rather a sentiment of (dis)approbation, a feeling, an impression of reflection. Nor does he argue against the possibility that virtue and vice might actually be causal relations. Instead, he argues ‘vice and virtue are not matters of fact, whose existence we can infer by reason.’ (emphasis added) This too would have been obvious to a reader of Book 1; causal reasoning can only lead us to an unobserved matter of fact of a sort we have previously experienced. Causal reasoning always ends with an idea, and we must previously have experienced an impression from which that idea is derived.

Hume’s claim that the ‘rules of morality... are not conclusions of our reason’ (T 3.1.1.6; SBN 457) is a claim about the origin of the ideas of virtue and vice. He does not mean that we cannot conclude that someone is virtuous by means of an argument; such an argument is possible as long as we have experienced the relevant impression from which we have derived the idea of virtue; once we have the idea of virtue, it can occur in arguments just like any other idea. And when he says that ‘[m]orality, therefore, is more properly felt, than judg’d of’ (T 3.1.2.1; SBN 470), he is not denying that moral claims are beliefs. He is saying something about both the origin and nature of such beliefs.

Admittedly, this is a lot clearer if one has read Book 1, something Hume did not expect all his readers to have done. But for those who have, it is difficult to read ‘[m]orality, therefore, is more properly felt, than judg’d of’ without hearing ‘belief is more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cogitative part of our natures’ (T1.4.1.8; SBN 183) and ‘all probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation.’ (T1.3.8.12; SBN 103) Hume is locating moral judgments squarely in the middle of his account of belief and probable reasoning, not denying that they belong there.

Now consider Hume’s characterization of reason in 3.1.1:

Reason is the discovery of truth or falshood. Truth or falshood consists in an agreement or disagreement either to the real relations of ideas, or to real existence and matter of fact. Whatever, therefore, is not susceptible of this agreement or disagreement, is incapable of being true or false, and can never be an object of our reason. Now ’tis evident our passions, volitions, and actions, are not susceptible of any such agreement or disagreement; being original facts and realities, compleat in themselves, and implying no reference to other passions, volitions, and actions. ’Tis impossible, therefore, they can be pronounc’d either true or false, and be either contrary or conformable to reason. (T 3.1.1.9; SBN 458)

Reason is the faculty (thought of suitably austerely) that produces truths or falsehoods. That is to say, chains of ideas, which constitute pieces of reasoning or inferences, result in beliefs (or relations of ideas), which are true or false. Inferences cannot result in impressions, either of sensation or reflection. ‘Passions, volitions, and actions’ just do not appear as the conclusions of inferences. But inferences do result in beliefs (ideas) and, as

far as I can tell, there are no constraints on what the content of a belief might be that are not exhausted by the Copy Principle. There is nothing to prevent a belief, as the conclusion of the piece of probable reasoning, from having virtue or vice as part of its content. Do deny this would be to saddle Hume with the view that one could never have an idea of a passion, but only the actual passion. Whatever else Hume might mean by his claim that ‘morals... cannot be deriv’d from reason’ (T 3.1.1.6; SBN 457), he cannot mean that a moral judgment is not a belief, or that a moral judgment cannot be the result of probable reasoning. Part of what he means is that ideas with moral content are not derived from demonstrative or causal relations. And another part of what he means is that the faculty of reason never results in an impression. It follows from this that ideas with moral content have to be derived from impressions. And unless there are sense impressions with moral content, moral ideas must be derived from impressions of reflection, or sentiments.<sup>8</sup>

### **III Belief**

In the passage from 3.1.1.9 just quoted, Hume spoke of ‘passions, volitions, and actions’. This is a useful grouping, as often in Hume it is irrelevant whether one talks of a passion, which causes a volition and hence an action, or a volition, which causes an action, or, simply, of an action. I’ll use the term ‘PVA’ for this grouping.

Beliefs motivate by causing PVA’s, primarily by locating pleasure and pain, according to the Pleasure Principle. Beliefs can motivate because they are ideas that share with impressions the extra force and vivacity that makes them causally efficacious:



The effect, then, of belief is to raise up a simple idea to an equality with our impressions, and bestow on it a like influence on the passions. This effect it can only have by making an idea approach an impression in force and vivacity. (T 1.3.10.3; SBN 119)

We are ‘more actuated and mov’d’ by beliefs, compared to ideas of the fancy. They have ‘more force and influence’ and ‘appear of greater importance’. They are ‘the governing principles of all our actions.’<sup>9</sup> ‘[B]elief is almost absolutely requisite to the exciting of our passions’ (T 1.3.10.4; SBN 120). Hume is explicit that this feature of beliefs ‘may give us a notion after what manner our reasonings from causation are able to operate on the will and passions’ (T 1.3.10.3; SBN 120).

Beliefs are ideas, and are typically produced by causal inferences. If they have the right sort of content, typically pleasure and pain, they can cause PVA’s. In fact, this was clear as early as the second section of the Treatise:

An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea. This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impressions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflection because deriv’d from it. (T 1.1.2.1; SBN 8)

The Pleasure Principle is the fundamental principle of human nature that perceptions of pleasure and pain concern, affect and weigh us, and thereby cause PVA’s. And in an early discussion of this point, already quoted, Hume is explicit that such a productive perception can be either an impression or an idea:

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Nature has implanted in the human mind a perception of good or evil, or in other words, of pain and pleasure, as the chief spring and moving principle of all its actions. But pain and pleasure have two ways of making their appearance in the mind; of which the one has effects very different from the other. They may either appear in impression to the actual feeling or experience, or only in idea, as at present when I mention them. (T 1.3.10.2; SBN 118)

I think it is significant that although Hume, as often as not, links pleasure with action via a passion, especially desire and aversion, he doesn't always, and he doesn't have to. The important point is the original, basic connection between the perception of pleasure and pain, and PVA's:

The mind by an original instinct tends to unite itself with the good, and to avoid the evil, tho' they be conceiv'd merely in idea, and be consider'd as to exist in any future period of time. (T 2.3.9.2; SBN 438)

Desire is one way the Pleasure Principle can be instantiated, but it is not the only way. Hume doesn't need desire, or any other passion, to bridge the gap between the perception of pleasure or pain, and action or inclination to act. There is no gap, as the principle is a fundamental fact about human nature.<sup>10</sup> This is a controversial claim, and we shall return to it.

Now Hume, famously, says that reason alone cannot produce or prevent PVA's: 'reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will' (T 2.3.3.1; SBN). Whatever else Hume might mean by the claim that reason doesn't produce PVA's, he can't mean that beliefs don't cause these things. It is manifestly obvious that he thinks they do.<sup>11</sup>

### III Motivation

The claim that beliefs, typically beliefs about pleasure, can cause PVA's is enough to show that Hume is not a 'Humean' about motivation and action. The 'Humean' theory of motivation holds that both a belief and a desire (more generally, both a cognitive and a conative component), are needed, jointly, to cause an action. In this model, the desire is conative in that it provides the goal of behaviour, while the belief just guides and directs the behaviour in achieving that goal. I desire a glass of water, and my beliefs, formed by causal reasoning, direct my behaviour so that I can fulfill that desire. I get a glass from the cupboard, I retrieve a pitcher of water, etc., etc.<sup>12</sup>

It is not difficult to see why this picture has been found in Hume. It is a natural enough way to read 'Of the influencing motives of the will' (T 2.3.3; SBN 413-18), and almost irresistible if one reads that section in isolation from the rest of Treatise, and with the belief/desire theory of action in mind:

It can never in the least concern us to know, that such objects are causes, and such others effects, if both causes and effects be indifferent to us. Where the objects themselves do not affect us, their connexion can never give them any influence; and 'tis plain, that as reason is nothing but the discovery of this connexion, it cannot be by its means that the objects are able to affect us (T 2.3.3.3; SBN 414).

If we are indifferent to features of the world, if beliefs about them in no way affect us, they will not influence us or cause PVA's. It may look here as if we need to appeal to independent desires to get to something that does weigh with us, concern us or influence us.

The belief/desire model isn't Hume's because it leaves out the crucial role of pleasure and the Pleasure Principle. The two sentences that precede the above passage read:

'Tis from the prospect of pain and pleasure that the aversion or propensity arises towards any object: And these emotions extend themselves to the causes and effects of that object, as they are pointed out to us by reason and experience.

Hume does not think that all objects in the world and their properties leave us indifferent and fail to affect us. If objects give us pleasure or pain, or if we believe that in easily instantiated circumstances they will give us pleasure or pain, then we are far from indifferent to them. Such objects weigh with us, are a matter of concern to us, and affect us. In Hume's psychology, the Pleasure Principle provides a firm link between perceptions of the mind with a certain content, and action.<sup>13</sup>

Though not entirely without supporters, this is still a minority view about Hume on motivation.<sup>14</sup> In general, the main feature of this account is the Pleasure Principle: the perception of pleasure or pain weighs with us, and causes PVA's. Let us call this picture of Hume the Motivating Belief Account, or MBA, and proceed to look at various ways one might fill in its details.

How should one see the precise role of passions, volitions and actions in the MBA? In particular, does desire (or aversion) play a special role? One might hold that desire (or aversion) is still necessary for one to be moved to act. In order for the belief in soon-to-be-instantiated pleasure, or pleasure in store, to motivate, one might think that Hume also requires a desire, not only for the means to obtain the pleasure, but for the pleasure itself.

I think this is Karlsson's view, who is the creator of the lovely expression 'pleasure in store':

Now Hume evidently maintains that a person forms a desire or aversion for something when, and only when, she judges that it has (or is likely to have) pleasure or pain in store for her (T 2.3.3.3; SBN 414, T 2.3.3.7; SBN 416-17, T 2.3.9.1; SBN 438, T 2.3.9.7; SBN 439, T 3.1.1.12; SBN 459), and this desire or aversion moves her to pursue or avoid the thing in question.<sup>15</sup>

If by 'desire', Karlsson means a particular sort of direct passion, I don't think any of the passages he cites provides decisive evidence for the thesis that when the belief in pleasure in store influences action, it typically does so by causing a desire which causes the action.

The second passage only mentions desire as an example of one of the passions which 'yield to our reason without any opposition' upon the perception of falsehood or insufficient means. That passage places as much emphasis on willing as desiring, as do the passages from 2.3.9, 'Of the direct passions.'<sup>16</sup> 3.3.1.2, from 'Moral distinctions not deriv'd from reason', is a repetition of 2.3.3.7, from 'Of the influencing motives of the will.' Each of these two paragraphs is, *inter alia*, about the two ways in which a passion may be said to be unreasonable (2.3.3.7) or, alternatively, the two ways in which reason may influence conduct (3.3.1.7). Reason, here causal reasoning, which issues in belief, may inform us of the existence or non-existence of the object of a passion, or may inform us of the sufficiency or insufficiency of the means chosen to obtain the perceived pleasure in store. Reason, passion and actions are frequently talked about in these paragraphs, whereas a desire (desire for a 'fruit of an excellent relish') is referred to only once. The expression 'desir'd good' is used in both paragraphs. But this needn't flag the

presence of a desire; it might flag the presence of a belief in perceived pleasure in store.<sup>17</sup>  
This is a possibility we will now explore.

Suppose expressions such as ‘desir’d good’ don’t refer to a particular direct passion but rather to the presence of a belief in pleasure in store that may cause any one of the motivating or direct passions. Then it looks as if Hume might use the term ‘desire’ and its cognates in more than one way. In one usage, ‘desire’ refers to a particular sort of motivating passion, which stands alongside volition, hope, fear, grief, joy etc. In the other usage, ‘desire’ is used to indicate the presence of any of the particular direct passions. This usage often draws attention to the close causal link between perceived pleasure and the subsequent presence of one of the motivating passions, which in turn causes action. So we have not only ‘desir’d good’, but such expressions as ‘All men desire pleasure.’

It is what Cohon calls the key passage, from which I have already quoted, that provides what many think to be decisive evidence that Hume thinks a desire, in particular, is needed to complete the causal link between belief and action. The key passage is the first one cited by Karlsson:

’Tis obvious, that when we have the prospect of pain or pleasure from any object, we feel a consequent emotion of aversion or propensity, and are carri’d to avoid or embrace what will give us this uneasiness or satisfaction. ’Tis also obvious, that this emotion rests not here, but, making us cast our view on every side, comprehends whatever objects are connected with its original one by the relation of cause and effect. Here then reasoning takes place to discover this relation; and according as our reasoning varies, our actions receive a subsequent variation. But ’tis evident, in this case, that the impulse arises not from reason, but is only

directed by it. 'Tis from the prospect of pain or pleasure that the aversion or propensity arises towards any object: and these emotions extend themselves to the causes and effects of that object, as they are pointed out to us by reason and experience. It can never in the least concern us to know, that such objects are causes, and such others effects, if both the causes and effects be indifferent to us. Where the objects themselves do not affect us, their connexion can never give them any influence; and 'tis plain. that as reason is nothing but the discovery of this connexion, it cannot be by its means that the objects are able to affect us. (T 2.3.3.3; SBN 414)

One has to read this with an unjaundiced eye to realize that it doesn't mention desires at all. The emphasis is all on the prospect of pleasure and pain, and the impulse, i.e., the propensity or aversion, to which it gives rise. But isn't 'propensity or aversion' just a synonym for 'desire'? Hume sometimes talks this way, as in the following list of direct passions in 2.3.9.2: 'desire and aversion, grief and joy, hope and fear, along with volition.' But consider the following passage:

The chief spring or actuating principle of the human mind is pleasure or pain; and when these sensations are remov'd, both from our thought and feeling, we are, in a great measure, incapable of passion or action, of desire or volition. The most immediate effects of pleasure and pain are the propense and averse motions of the mind; which are diversify'd into volition, into desire and aversion, grief and joy, hope and fear (T 3.3.1.2; SBN).

Here the direct passions are described as 'the propense and averse motions of the mind.' This seems to me to be just another way of saying that they are motivating, that they give

rise to action. But later in the very same sentence, Hume speaks of ‘desire and aversion’ as one of the particular passions into which the general category is ‘diversify’d.’

It seems to me that one (not the only) promising way to read all this is to say that ‘desire’, ‘aversion’ and ‘propensity’, and their cognates, are sometimes used to refer to the class of direct passions as a whole. Alternatively, these terms are sometimes used to pick out just one particular sort of motivating passion. As an instance of a particular sort of direct passion, a desire has a unique phenomenology. And different desires have different phenomenologies. It just seems empirically false that an instance of (some) desire (or other) is always present as a causal antecedent of action. In fact, desires, as particular sort of direct passion, are only really needed in special circumstances, though they may in fact occur in many others.<sup>18</sup> It is all right to use ‘desire’ as a synonym for ‘the propense and averse motions of the mind’, or ‘the direct passions’ or ‘the motivating passions’ as long as it is clear what one is doing.

#### **IV The Will and the Direct Passions**

We are still investigating the details of how to fill out the Motivating Belief Account, as found in Hume. We have now rejected the view that a belief about pleasure in store, in order to cause an action, needs first to cause a desire, which in turn causes an action.

Desires are for Hume just one sort of motivating passion; any direct passion can be motivating, that is, can be a passion that causes action. And a perception (impression or idea) of pleasure or pain can cause any one of the direct passions. So now let us consider MBA as claiming that beliefs about pleasure and pain cause direct passions of any sort, which in turn cause actions. It is possible that, all things considered, this is the thesis that best accords with the bulk of the texts. But it leaves out any significant role for the will



and volitions. There is just enough in Hume about the will and its products to make it worthwhile for us to see how MBA can be filled out in a way that makes crucial use of the will. Once one finds a place for the will and its volitions, it is not so clear that Hume needs to always appeal to direct passions as well as beliefs about pleasure in his account of the antecedents of action. I want to consider the radical view that Hume's psychology didn't require a direct passion to be inserted between a belief concerning pleasure in store and action.

Even if one thinks that for Hume, it is completely unproblematic to treat volition as an direct passion, along with desire, hope, fear etc., there is still room in Hume for something very much in the spirit of the radical view I want to explore. No one who wants to treat Hume as committed to the claim that an action is always caused by a passion would be happy with counting a sequence that contained a belief about pleasure and a volition, but no other direct passion, as an adequate cause of action. We will explore why this is so shortly. But for the moment, let us treat volitions, not as direct passions, but as sui generis secondary impressions that are the product of the will.

The first three sentences of Book 2, Part 3, 'Of the will and direct passions', read:  
We come now to explain the direct passions, or impressions, which arise immediately from good or evil, from pain or pleasure. Of this kind are, desire and aversion, grief and joy, hope and fear. Of all the immediate effects of pain and pleasure, there is none more remarkable than the WILL; and tho', properly speaking, it be not comprehended among the passions, yet as the full understanding of its nature and properties, is necessary to the explanation of them, we shall here make it the subject of our enquiry.

Let us first make what I take to be an obvious correction, and some clarification. ‘Will’ is a faculty term, so strictly speaking, what Hume is talking about here is what the will produces, not the will itself. The impressions which the will produces are usually called ‘volitions’, and Hume uses this term elsewhere.<sup>19</sup> With this correction, we can read the rest of the sentence as claiming something like this: Volitions, properly speaking, are not passions. But they are secondary impressions, and will be treated along with the direct passions for the purposes of discussion in Book 2, part, 3.<sup>20</sup>

A natural way of reading the above three sentences is that volitions are perhaps the most significant items to be immediately caused by perceptions of pain and pleasure, where ‘immediately caused’ rules out the intervention of some (other) direct passion.<sup>21</sup> Since, traditionally, volitions are the immediate causes of actions, it looks as if there can be a causal chain from perceptions of pleasure to action via no perception of the mind other than volition. One characterization of volitions as immediate causes of action is Locke’s:

Volition... is an act of the Mind directing its thought to the production of any Action, and thereby exerting its power to produce it. (Essay 2.21.28)

Hume’s characterization echoes this:

By the will, I mean nothing but the internal impression we feel and are conscious of, when we knowingly give rise to any new motion of our body, or new perception of our mind. This impression, like the preceding ones of pride and humility, love and hatred, ’tis impossible to define (T 2.3.1.2; SBN 399)<sup>22</sup>

As Cohon notes (p. 34), there is a hint of the epiphenomenal about this. But Hume usually speaks of volitions and actions as pairs, with the former causing the latter. For example, in paragraph 4 of 'Of the influencing motives of the will', Hume argues that

Since reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to any volition, I infer that the same faculty is as incapable of preventing volition, or of disputing the preference with any passion or emotion.

The term 'volition' is used several times in this paragraph. The point seems to be that if reason were to prevent a passion from issuing in action, it would have to prevent the volition that would have been the proximate cause of action if reason hadn't intervened. But if reason had 'an original influence on the will, ...[it] must be able to cause, as well as hinder, any act of volition.'

Though Hume sometimes talks, like Locke, of volitions as acts of mind or will, more often he treats them simply as impressions that cause actions. So the natural reading of the first three sentences of Part 3 of Book 2 gives us something like the following: the most significant immediate effect of the perception of pleasure in store is the activation of the will, or the production of a volition; a volition is the immediate cause of an action. At the very least, it seems that Hume is happy with the thought that a belief and volition can serve as an adequate explanation of some actions, even if it is more typical for the beliefs to cause direct passions first. Let us see how volitions might enter into the picture in a typical case, where the belief in pleasure in store causes a direct passion, such as desire or aversion, hope or fear. For example, suppose that the belief that eating the apple will give me pleasure causes a desire to eat the apple. In most cases, I can't simply eat the apple; I must do something as a means towards the end of eating it. A little bit of causal reasoning

leads to the belief that if I reach out my hand just so, I can grasp the apple, bring it to my mouth and eat it. The desire to eat the apple, plus the belief that an action of a certain sort will bring about my eating the apple, puts the will into gear, and causes a volition, which in turn causes an instance of that sort of action.<sup>23</sup>

Although this example collapses a whole theory of action and practical reasoning into a few sentences, it is accurate enough about a typical sort of account of the antecedents of action that Hume might give. The belief in pleasure in store causes a desire for that pleasure. That desire may combine with a belief about how to satisfy that desire, causing a volition. The volition in turn causes an action. The volition needn't be considered epiphenomenal as it ensures that the action is intentional.<sup>24</sup> The belief that eating the apple will give me pleasure may be false. The belief that moving my hand just so will bring about my eating the apple may be false. These are the two ways the desire or the action may be considered unreasonable, though it is clear that in each case, the problem lies with the belief, not the volition, desire or action.

This picture, an instance of the MBA account, differs from the traditional picture mainly in allowing a belief in pleasure to cause a desire. On the MBA, a belief can be causally efficacious, whereas the traditional picture holds belief, as the product of reason, to be inert. In Section III above, we argued that it was clear from the text that Hume held that beliefs about pleasure could be causes of PVA's. I now want to indicate that Hume's whole account of impressions, ideas, beliefs and vivacity points in the direction of the causal efficacy of beliefs. Impressions, whether of sensation or reflection, are characterized by their feeling, emotion, sensation or sentiment.<sup>25</sup> We initially grasp the distinction between impressions and ideas because everyone knows 'the difference

between feeling and thinking.’ (1.1.1.2) It is a crucial part of Hume’s theory that belief is a feeling, and that the nature of that ‘feeling or sentiment’ is analogous to some ‘other sentiment of the human mind.’ That sentiment is of course the feeling characteristic of impressions. In the body of the Treatise, Hume describes this feeling in terms of force and vivacity. In the Appendix, he tries to be more accurate, and describes beliefs, in contrast to ‘the loose and indolent reveries of a castle-builder’, this way:

They strike upon us with more force; they are more present to us; the mind has a firmer hold of them, and is more actuated and mov’d by them. It acquiesces in them; and, in a manner, fixes and reposes it self on them. In short, they approach nearer to the impressions, which are immediately present to us; and are therefore analogous to many other operations of the mind. (App 3; SBN 624-625)

If belief did not bear this analogy with impressions, ‘we must despair of explaining its causes’, Hume says in the same passage. Beliefs are the product of causal reasoning.

Hume’s explanation of belief, as approximating to impressions, is part of his explanation of causal reasoning. This explanation is summed up in the following ‘general maxim in the science of human nature’:

when any impression becomes present to us, it not only transports the mind to such ideas are related to it, but likewise communicates to them a share of its force and vivacity. (T 1.3.8.2; SBN 98)

Hume was very proud of his account of belief in terms of its feeling, sentiment, emotion or sensation. That theory has many important features. One of them is the unified account of memory, sense impressions and belief. All of these are characterized in terms of force and vivacity; the main items of our cognitive experience are thus rendered uniform.

Another feature of Hume's account is that it preserves belief from the otherwise unassailable force of sceptical arguments, as in 'Scepticism with regard to reason.' It is the vivacity of ideas, and its characteristics, that drive many of the arguments of 'Conclusion to this book.'

Hume's account of belief has many parallels to his account of the passions. He explicitly draws analogies between them. The first analogy is between belief formation and the formation of the indirect passions. In the formation of causal beliefs,

the present impression gives a vivacity to the fancy, and the relation [of association] conveys this vivacity, by an easy transition, to the related idea...

There is evidently a great analogy betwixt that hypothesis [the formation and nature of causal beliefs], and our present one of an impression and idea, that transfuse themselves into another impression and idea by means of their double relation: Which analogy must be allow'd to be no despicable proof of both hypotheses' (T 2.1.5.11; SBN 290).

The second analogy is between belief and sympathy. The association of ideas plays a crucial role in both belief and sympathy, and in each case an idea is enlivened by the addition of extra force and vivacity. In the case of belief, the source of the extra force and vivacity is the associated impression; in the case of sympathy the source is the impression of the self. Hume says 'Let us compare all these circumstances, and we shall find, that sympathy is exactly correspondent to the operations of our understanding; and even contains something more surprizing and extraordinary' (T 2.1.11.8; SBN 320). Sympathy is more extraordinary than belief because in the latter case, an idea is

enlivened so that it approximates to an impression, while in the former case it actually turns into an impression.<sup>26</sup>

Cohon emphasizes that for perceptions of pleasure to cause motivating passions, those perceptions need to be seen as active, not inert. ‘Hume does not think the sensation of pain itself an ‘indolent judgment of the understanding.’ Rather pain is the sort of experience that inherently generates an impulse to retreat... the believed idea of pain has an influence on the passions similar to that of an actual feeling of pain’ (Cohon p. 48)) Once one allows beliefs to be causally active, there is no reason to think that they can only cause passions, rather than volitions or actions. The following distinct sequences all seem to me to be very common:

- the sensation of pain (putting one’s hand on a hot burner) directly causes an involuntary, ‘reflex’ action of the withdrawal of the hand (sensation causes action);
- a less painful sensation causes the intentional action of withdrawing one’s hand (sensation causes volition causes action);
- an even less painful sensation causes a desire for the pain to stop, which, combined with a belief about how to stop the pain, causes a volition which causes an action (sensation causes passion which, together with belief, causes volition and action).

It is just as easy to construct distinct cases with ideas of pain, rather than sensations. The moral seems to be that, once one allows beliefs to cause passions, one is committed to allowing them to cause volitions and actions as well. The MBA maintains

that beliefs about pleasure cause PVA's. That claim now appears to be distributive: beliefs about pleasure can cause passions, or cause volitions, or cause actions.<sup>27</sup>

## **V 'Reason alone'**

When Hume claims that 'reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will' (2.3.3.1; SBN 413), i.e., doesn't cause passions, actions or volitions, what does he mean? We have already argued that he doesn't mean that beliefs don't cause such things. The Pleasure Principle is a general principle of human nature that provides a firm link between beliefs about pleasure or pain, and passions, actions or volitions. That is to say, the Pleasure Principle leads to the Motivating Belief Account, in any one of its many forms. But anyone who finds that account in Hume is faced with a problem. The faculty of reason produces beliefs; beliefs cause PVA's. If 'produce' is a causal concept and if causation is a transitive concept, then it looks as if the faculty of reason causes PVA's. This appears to be incompatible with the claim that reason alone doesn't provide a motive to the will. The seeming incompatibility is even more apparent with this other (I think more accurate) formulation of Hume's claim: 'reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to volition' (T 2.3.3.4; SBN 414). Inferences, or items of reasoning, or exercises of the faculty of reasoning, end with beliefs. Some beliefs 'give rise to volition'.<sup>28</sup> So inferences or reasonings produce or give rise to things which give rise to volitions, and hence actions.

Speaking of the faculty of reason requires us to rethink what appears to be obvious on the traditional view.<sup>29</sup> On that view, it was assumed that 'reason alone doesn't provide a motive' just meant, or straightforwardly implied, that 'beliefs on their own don't motivate,' that is to say, beliefs on their own do not cause PVA's.<sup>30</sup> But if 'reason'



is a faculty term, then there is at least a little work to do to get from 'reason alone doesn't motivate' to 'beliefs don't motivate' via the uncontroversial 'reason produces beliefs.'

Consider just a few of Hume's formulations of the thesis we are considering: 'reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will' (T 2.3.3.1; SBN 413), 'reasoning... never influences any of our actions, but only as it directs our judgment concerning causes and effects' (T 2.3.3.2; SBN 414), 'the impulse arises not from reason, but is only directed by it' (T 2.3.3.3; SBN 414), 'as reasoning is nothing but the discovery of this [causal] connexion, it cannot be by its means that the objects are able to affect us' (T 2.3.3.3; SBN 414), 'reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to volition' (T 2.3.3.4; SBN 414), 'reason has no original influence' (2.3.3.4; SBN 415). Since 'reason' is a faculty term, we can distinguish the faculty (reason), the characteristic activity of the faculty (reasoning or inference), and the result or outcome of that activity (conclusion or object of reason, belief).<sup>31</sup> The characteristic activity of the faculty of reason is reasoning or inference, and Hume is clear that 'All kinds of reasoning consist in nothing but a comparison, and a discovery of those relations... which two or more objects bear to each other' (T 1.3.2.2; SBN 73). He is equally clear that the outcome of reasoning is a belief.<sup>32</sup> What reason produces is beliefs. Once the activity of reasoning produces a belief as the termination of that activity, the faculty of reason has done its job. PVA's are not produced by reason because they are not the outcome of the reasoning process. They are not conclusions of reason. Reason doesn't produce impressions of reflection or passions any more than it produces impressions of sensation. An argument or piece of reasoning doesn't have as its conclusion either a feeling of anger or the gustatory sensation of roast beef. Of course, the belief with which the argument

concludes might cause such an impression, but such an impression is not the outcome of a piece of reasoning.<sup>33</sup>

On Hume's view, in an instance of probable reasoning, a present impression causes an idea with which it is associated, and communicates to that idea a share of its force and vivacity. That is what turns the idea into a belief. This belief, if it has the right sort of content, can give rise to a passion and/or a volition, and hence an action. This is a straightforward causal chain. So what is Hume denying when he claims that 'reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to volition' (T 2.3.3.4; SBN 414)? Passions or volitions are impressions, not ideas. But the conclusion of any argument, or piece of reasoning, is an idea, not an impression. The faculty of reason produces ideas, not impressions. But an action requires a volition, not an idea of a volition, as its cause. Some faculties, such as the senses, produce impressions. But other faculties, such as reason and the imagination produce only ideas. Contrary to long standing tradition, Hume thinks that reason is just the wrong sort of thing to produce passions, volitions or actions. It is the same sort of mistake as it would be to claim that the imagination produces impressions of sensation. But just as a piece of reasoning (an inference, or argument) can produce a belief that causes the holder of that belief to become angry, so too can it produce a belief that causes a volition (or a passion and then a volition) which in turn causes an action. But none of the anger, the volition, the passion or the action is the outcome of a piece of reasoning or a conclusion to an argument. That is just not the way the faculty of reason works. There is a partial analogy here with reason and the moral senses; the faculty of reason is such that it cannot produce an impression as a conclusion to an argument or the end point of an inference. A fortiori, it can produce neither an

impression from which the idea of virtue is derived nor a volition (or passion) that brings about an action.

This is only part of the story. For one thing, on the account just sketched, Hume could be accused of simply changing the subject.<sup>34</sup> On the traditional account, the faculty of reason can produce volitions. Hume gives us an account of reason in which it produces only beliefs, so that it is virtually a category mistake to suggest that reason produces volitions. I don't think that this is a decisive objection. Hume would be happy, I suggest, to let the matter that concerns us come down to a choice between different accounts of reason, to be decided on empirical and theoretical grounds. Nonetheless, the arguments of 2.3.3, like the arguments of 3.1.1, are meant to make a contribution on their own, and not merely follow from Hume's general picture.<sup>35</sup> Another limitation of the above account is this. The point of beliefs was to approximate to impressions (T 1.3.10.3; SBN 119); in order to survive, we need to act on the belief that something is about to happen. We can't wait for the impression of colliding with a train; we have to act on the belief before the event actually occurs. But if beliefs can stand in for impressions, then reason can produce, not impressions, but the simulacrum of impressions. The claim that reason produces ideas, not impressions, is not enough to understand what Hume is ruling out when he says that reason, acting alone, doesn't cause passions, volitions or actions.

We need to remember the original point of arguing that "reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will". Hume wanted to undermine the traditional "talk of the combat of passion and reason and passions" where it was "usual in philosophy, and even in common life... to give the preference to reason, and assert that men are only so far virtuous as they conform themselves to its dictates" (T 2.3.1.1; SBN 413). Hume's

attack on this picture was part of his overall attack on the picture of human nature that saw “reason” as the faculty responsible for all the elevated things in life (truth, beauty, the good), while the faculty that is the passions, which include desires, especially the desire for pleasure, was responsible for all that was base in human nature. Hume wanted to replace this picture of human nature with one where the faculty of reason did not play a dominant role. Human nature is such that the faculty of reason can be understood, not as an independently functioning faculty, but only as a faculty functioning together with the senses, the passions and the imagination. It is only because we are feeling creatures that reason can function at all. Hume’s claim that “Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions” is a very provocative way of summing up his opposition to the traditional picture of reason as dominant in the combat between reason and the passions.

Hume’s goal with respect to reason and the passions is not adequately or appropriately represented by the modern belief/desire theory of action, and his claim that “reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will” does not translate into “beliefs alone don’t motivate.” Hume’s position on reason and the passions is part of his overall account of reason and human nature, which includes the following claims:

- the activity of probable reasoning cannot be understood as the activity of an independently functioning faculty of reason; it requires an appeal, inter alia, to an account of beliefs as feelings (T 1.3.6);
- such beliefs survive sceptical scrutiny only because belief is an act of the sensitive side of our nature (T 1.4.1);

- “Where reason is lively, and mixes itself with some propensity, it ought to be assented to. Where it does not, it never can have any title to operate on us (T 1.4.7.11; SBN 270).<sup>36</sup>

Seen in this context, the claim that “reason alone” doesn’t motivate is the claim that reason, as a faculty of human beings, can only function, not on its own, but in harmony with our feelings and passions. The picture of reason as potentially triumphing over the passions is an empirically false picture of human nature. Seen in this light, the fact some that beliefs, *i.e.*, beliefs about pleasure, can motivate us to act, either directly or by causing some passion, far from being a problem for, is rather an integral part of, his theory.

Given human nature as it is, two things are required for the result of a piece of reasoning to produce passions or volitions: the idea so produced must have the right sort of content, *i.e.*, pleasure or pain, and it must have sufficient force and vivacity to have the sort of causal impact impressions have. These are just general features of human nature, discovered empirically. If we consider reason and belief in abstraction from these features, that is, if we consider reason alone, we cannot account for what belief is, how the faculty of reason produces beliefs, nor how beliefs survive sceptical arguments. Nor could we understand how certain beliefs are motivating, *i.e.*, produce PVA’s. Once those features are taken into account, we have a rather different picture of the faculty of reason from that with which we are likely to have started. We believe and act, but we do neither because of reason alone. The faculty of reason does not, and cannot, function in isolation from the sensitive and imaginative parts of our natures.

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Notes

\* This paper has been presented at several different forums including the department colloquium at Uppsala, the Humean Readings Group in New York, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Hume Conference in Belo Horizonte, a graduate seminar in Oxford, the Hume Society Conference in Boston, and a Hume conference in Cambridge organized by Peter Kail and Marina Frasca-Spada. I thank audiences at and organizers of all these. Special thanks to Rachel Cohon, Don Garrett and Michael Gill for extensive discussion over the years and detailed comments. Thanks also to Elizabeth Radcliffe, Kate Abramson, Peter Kail and Michael Karlsson for criticism and support.

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<sup>1</sup> References to Hume's *Treatise* follow the conventions of this volume. See also T 2.1.10.8-10; SBN 314-15, T 2.3.1.1-2; SBN 399, T 2.3.3.3; SBN 414, T 2.3.3.9.1-7, SBN 438-39, T 3.3.1.27; SBN 589-90, T 3.3.1.2; SBN 574.

<sup>2</sup> What used to be the standard view is well represented by Stroud 1977, Mackie 1980, and Bricke 1996. Radcliffe 1999 presents an important development of the standard view. Important new work can be found in Baier 1991, Persson 1997, Karlsson 2006, Kail 2007, and Cohon 2008. There are all sorts of questions, especially about practical reason and Hume's claim that a passion 'contains not any representative quality, which renders it a copy of any other existence' (T 2.3.3.5; SBN 415), that I only touch on here. Much other good work (e.g., Sturgeon 2001, Setiya 2004) is available and more is being produced all the time.

<sup>3</sup> The characteristic activity of the faculty of the will is willing. That activity terminates in volition. Volitions are the proximal causes of actions. The will can be pushed into



activity by a passion, i.e., passions can cause volitions. The characteristic activity of the faculty of reason is inferring or reasoning. A demonstrative inference is made up of intuitions. So by a minor extension, intuitions also count as the results of the characteristic activity of the faculty of reason, even though they are not inferences. The activity of probable or causal inference results in beliefs. For the purposes of this paper, I ignore the complications that arise from considering demonstrative inferences, and the items of knowledge (objects of reason, relations of ideas) with which they terminate.

<sup>4</sup> This issue might be controversial. Don Garrett advocates what may be a more robust view of Hume on faculties:

Hume himself makes central and extensive use of the term ‘faculty’ in the Treatise... His objection is not to characterizing things as having faculties; rather, it is to supposing that by doing so one has already isolated and provided ultimate explanations. (Garrett 2006, p. 153)

I agree that Hume’s use of faculty talk is central to the way he expresses his views, and it is important for us to understand that. I think it is equally important to realize that for Hume the mention of faculties carries no explanatory weight. I think Garrett and I both have pretty much the same view of Hume’s objection to the explanatory fruitfulness of faculties. Pp. 152-158 of Garrett’s article present excellent guidance on how to understand Hume on the faculty of reason.

<sup>5</sup> See the discussion about the different uses of ‘desire’ in section III of this paper.

<sup>6</sup> See Owen 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Don Garrett reminds me that there is a sense in which the faculty of reason produces the impression of necessary connection. It is even true, I suppose, that having produced that impression, it then goes on to make use of the idea derived from that impression in subsequent inferences. But it doesn't produce that impression as the conclusion of an inference; it is the activity of the exercise of the faculty of reason, the actual experiencing an inference taking us from something observed to something unobserved, that produces the impression of determination or necessity. The point is that we need an account of the mechanism of causal inference that doesn't rely on our already having the idea of necessary connection. As Hume famously quips, 'perhaps 'twill appear in the end, that the necessary connexion depends on the inference, instead of the inference's depending on the necessary connexion.' (T 1.3.6.3; SBN 88)

<sup>8</sup> As the title of this section of my paper indicates, I am not trying to give an account of 3.1.1. I am just using one aspect of it as an example of the importance of the Copy Principle.

<sup>9</sup> The full passages come from the Appendix: 'They strike upon us with more force; they are more present to us; the mind has a firmer hold of them, and is more actuated and mov'd by them. It acquiesces in them; and, in a manner, fixes and reposes itself on them.' (T A2; SBN 624-25) What 'distinguishes the ideas of the judgment from the fictions of the imagination... gives them more force and influence; makes them appear of greater importance; infixes them in the mind, and renders them the governing principles of all our actions.' (T 1.3.7.7; SBN 629) See also the first Enquiry (EHU 5.12; SBN 49-50), which contains almost exactly the same wording.

<sup>10</sup> There is one place where Hume suggests an almost evolutionary account of the Pleasure Principle: ‘We are conscious, that we ourselves, in adapting means to ends, are guided by reason and design, and that ’tis not ignorantly nor casually we perform those actions which tend to self-preservation, to the obtaining pleasure, and avoiding pain’ (T 1.3.16.2; SBN 176).

<sup>11</sup> If one wants to maintain a traditional reading of ‘reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will’, then one will have to deny that the perception of a future pleasure is a belief. Elizabeth Radcliffe was prepared to do this in 1999:

Thus, we can conclude that the prospect of pleasure or pain, which is the basis of our concern, is not discerned by reason. So it follows on my argument that ‘the prospect of pleasure or pain’ should not be regarded as a belief. (Radcliffe 1999, p.112)

I admire the consistency such a position shows, but it is rather quixotic. I think it is more plausible to rethink what the claim ‘reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will’ might mean. See section V below. Radcliffe has significant insights and important arguments, which can’t be addressed here.

<sup>12</sup> Smith 1994, pp. 8-9 and passim. The Humean theory is not just a theory of motivation, or motivating reasons; it is also a theory about what constitutes a reason for action. I am not concerned with the question of what constitutes a reason for action here; indeed I suspect that it is largely irrelevant to Hume’s discussion of reason and the passions.

<sup>13</sup> Cohon calls 2.3.3.3 ‘the key paragraph’ (Cohon 2008, p. 38). She supports the interpretation of this paragraph given here with, inter alia, further textual evidence from

the Dissertation of the Passions (Part 5, section 1) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Enquiry (EPM 1.7; SBN 172). See Cohon pp. 50-51. These texts seem to me decisive. They are, respectively:

It seems evident, that reason, in a strict sense, as meaning the judgment of truth and falsehood, can never, of itself, be any motive to the will, and can have no influence but so far as it touches some passion or affection. Abstract relations of ideas are the object of curiosity, not of volition. And matters of fact, where they are neither good nor evil, where they neither excite desire nor aversion, are totally indifferent, and whether known or unknown, whether mistaken or rightly apprehended, cannot be regarded as any motive to action.

And

inferences and conclusions of the understanding, which of themselves have no hold of the affections, nor set in motion the active powers of men, ... discover truths: But where the truths which they discover are indifferent, and beget no desire or aversion, they can have no influence on conduct and behaviour.

<sup>14</sup> In one form or other, all of Cohon 2008, Karlsson 2006, Baier 1991, Persson 1997, and Kail 2007 hold this minority view. Both Karlsson and Cohon patiently provide a sympathetic account of Hume as holding that any belief, even one about pleasure or pain, needs to be supplemented by an independently held desire in order to cause a PVA. They both reject that view of Hume, but nonetheless think that such a belief must give rise to a desire (Karlsson) or, more generally, a motivating passion (Cohon) in order to influence action.

<sup>15</sup> Karlsson 2006. This fine article discusses not just motivation, but also practical reasoning, in Hume and his critics. It covers much more ground than my effort here, which concentrates primarily on the importance of belief and the Pleasure Principle.

<sup>16</sup> We'll discuss 2.3.9 in the next section of this paper.

<sup>17</sup> There is a way of making the notion of pleasure as a desired good the center of Hume's account of motivation. See Kail 2007, chapter 8. I hope to explore that in another place.

<sup>18</sup> The sort of thing I have in mind are actions that result from those direct passions that arise, not from the perception of pleasure or pain, but

from a natural impulse or instinct, which is perfectly unaccountable. Of this kind is the desire of punishment to our enemies, and of happiness to our friends; hunger, lust, and a few other bodily appetites. These passions, properly speaking, produce good and evil, and proceed not from them, like the other affections (T 2.3.9.8; SBN 439)

Desires are needed in these cases precisely because there is no belief in pleasure in store, and the Pleasure Principle doesn't apply.

<sup>19</sup> Though never, interestingly enough, in the sections on liberty and necessity. It is worth noting that in 1.3.14.12 (SBN632), and again in 1.3.15.1 (SBN 173), volitions are used as an example of the sort of thing that can be caused by anything. And of course Hume denies that a volition is an impression that can serve as the source of our idea of power or necessary connection.

<sup>20</sup> In 2.3.9.2 (SBN 438), Hume phrases his list of indirect passions so as to make it appear that volitions are somewhat different from the others: 'the direct passions of desire

and aversion, grief and joy, hope and fear, along with volition.’ But two paragraphs later, volition is mentioned along with other direct passions without any hint of difference: ‘the direct passions, or the impressions of volition and desire,’ ‘the direct affections... desire of volition, joy or hope.’ The passage from 3.3.1.2 (SBN 574), quoted above, also seems to separate volitions from desire, aversion, hope, fear, grief and joy as different sorts of impressions into which ‘the propense and averse motions of the mind’ are diversified.

<sup>21</sup> Don Garrett suggested to me that Hume might just be saying that, of all the direct passions, none is more remarkable than the will.

<sup>22</sup> This passage also needs to be corrected, replacing ‘the will’ with ‘a volition, the product of the faculty of the will’.

<sup>23</sup> It took me far too long, and required reading Cohon 2008, p. 41-2, to see that this is the picture Hume is sketching in 2.3.9.7 (SBN 439). I think Tito Magri may have tried to explain this to me as well. The passage reads:

DESIRE arises from good consider’d simply, and AVERSION is deriv’d from evil.

The WILL exerts itself, when either the good or the absence of evil may be attain’d by any action of the mind or body.

Cohon, using ‘Spontaneous Creation view’ where I use ‘MBA’, goes on to say:

Since desire arises from the consideration of good (that is, pleasure), then, says the Spontaneous Creation view, it is not present all along, but comes into existence anew when one considers the prospect of pleasure. When one also believes that one may acquire the good or avert the evil by acting, the will exerts itself.

<sup>24</sup> Cohon 2008, p. 34 recognizes that volitions may play this role in Hume.

<sup>25</sup> Hume often uses these terms interchangeably. See T 2.2.8.4; SBN 373-4 and T 2.3.3.8; SBN 417.

<sup>26</sup> Stroud 1977, chapter 7, argues that Hume's account of belief as an act of the sensitive part of our natures sits badly with the claim that beliefs, arrived at by reasoning, can never be a motive to any action of the will. It is unarguable that Hume's account of belief is in tension with any account of belief that leaves it inert. The tension is irresolvable as long as one thinks 'reason alone doesn't motivate' implies 'beliefs are inert.'

<sup>27</sup> The difference between this distributed claim, and the claim that beliefs about pleasure can only cause passions (and hence volitions and actions) is why those who hold the latter would be unhappy with allowing volitions to count unproblematically as direct passions.

<sup>28</sup> For the purposes of the discussion in this section, it doesn't matter whether one thinks that beliefs can cause passions, which in turn causes volitions, or whether it is possible that beliefs can produce volitions directly.

<sup>29</sup> Understanding Hume on reason in just about any context requires recognition that the term 'reason' is, for Hume, primarily a faculty term. See note 4 above. Understanding the centrality of Hume's use of faculty language is quite compatible with maintaining, as I do, that Hume has a very thin view of faculties.

<sup>30</sup> See Stroud 1977, Mackie 1980, and Bricke 1996. See Cohon 2008, chapters 1 to 3, for countless other references.

<sup>31</sup> Pervasive use of faculty terminology results in usages that we regard as rather odd, and some care is required when interpreting them. See notes 3 and 4 above.

<sup>32</sup> See T 1.3.4-10; SBN 82-123. Again, I leave out demonstrative reasoning and its outcome for ease of presentation. Cohon 2008, pp. 65-68, provides an excellent summary of this way of looking at Hume on reason.

<sup>33</sup> This point simply follows from the Copy Principle, and the nature of the faculty of reason. It is analogous to the point made about reason and moral distinctions in Section II above. It is part of Cohen's position, and she articulates it towards the end of a long and thorough discussion of the issue: 'when Hume says that reason alone cannot produce a passion, what he means is that a passion is not the outcome of a reasoning process' (Cohon 2008, p. 77). Persson 1997 is on to something similar when he talks about belief being a manifestation of reason. Garrett finds it an uncontroversial thing to say about Hume in an encyclopedia article on Hume: 'For him, the outcome of reasoning itself is belief, not desire or action; and although reasoning can, in concert with other aspects of one's nature, contribute to the production of new desires and actions, this process of production is not itself one of reasoning.' (Garrett 2005). Garrett uses this, however, to support the controversial claim that Hume rejects even a limited, means-ends conception of practical reasoning. An investigation of Hume on practical reasoning is beyond the scope of this paper, as is an investigation of what is at stake when Hume denies that a passion has any representative quality. Nor will I talk about the calm versus the violent passions, a conflict which Hume thinks replaces the alleged conflict between reason and the passions. But I think this much follows straightforwardly. Something can be contrary



to reason only if it is (or is suitably related to) the outcome of a piece of reasoning, a belief. But only other beliefs (or things suitably related to beliefs) are capable of this. So just as PVA's cannot be the conclusions of arguments, neither can they be contrary to conclusions of arguments, except in the two relevant ways Hume mentions.

<sup>34</sup> Don Garrett reminded me of this. The same point is made by Stroud 1977, p. 157.

<sup>35</sup> One of the original contributions made by 2.3.3 is the argument from the non-representational nature of the passions, and the related argument concerning just what it means to call an action "unreasonable." As mentioned before, I cannot go into these important arguments here.

<sup>36</sup> For my views on the first two of these points, see Owen 1999. For a thorough discussion of the third point, see Garrett.