

DAVID HUME : THE CONCEPT OF SELF-LOVE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DISCUSSION OF MORALITY

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ABSTRACT

David Hume discusses morality in his book *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals (1751)*. In the discussion of morality, he focuses on three main issues, these are Benevolence, Utility and Justice. Benevolence occupies a large place in his discussion. In this discussion of Benevolence, he is discussing one of the topics which is self-love. Hume had discussed self-love in negative way. According to Hume the principle of self-love is not a moral principle and it is unnecessary for moral theory. In this research article Researcher basically tried to show how Hume discusses self-love and how this theory differs from Hobbes's theory. David Hume remains a pioneer philosopher up to the end of the 18th century in the realm of British empiricism. Who took empiricism seriously and who endeavors to develop a radical consistence empiricist philosophical outlook. As we all know David Hume will be always recognized in the history of western philosophy for his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (1748)*, but there is another aspect of his philosophy which is his moral philosophy. The name of the book of his moral philosophy is *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals (1751)*. Hume thought that we need to a scientific discussion about our moral life because it is actually possible to give answer of our moral life scientifically. Hume felt that the moral aspect of human life has been neglected from very beginning.

Key Words : Benevolence, Utility, Justice, Morals, Self-Love, Approbation.

Introduction

David Hume formulated that morality may be grounded in senses and emotions rather than reason or divine will, put forth the origins of much of utilitarian thought. Hume seems to support many varied philosophical doctrine. There is much in his writing to suggest that Hume was a utilitarian philosopher. His moral theory based on a utilitarian concept that means that all social virtues are defined by their usefulness to the individual or their society. Hume believed that morality arises in individual sentiments, which suggest us that he may be best interpreted as a subjectivist.

In Hume's moral philosophy as we see the prior concepts of his theory are virtue, benevolence and justice. According to Hume's morality benevolence person has given the sovereign place. Friendly, generous, grateful these are the notable characteristic of happiness in the society but benevolence is the highest virtue among all of these and benevolence can give the society satisfaction. It is not the case that Hume says that benevolence is considered a virtue only because of its utility. Some qualities, such as courtesy, are instantly agreed upon, without mention of any utility and benevolence itself is immediately pleasing and agreeable. But the moral sanction that benevolence aroused is partly due to its usefulness. Before proceeding further with the subject of utility, we should note that Hume devotes an appendix to the enquiry to showing that there is such a thing as benevolence or, rather that so-called benevolence is not merely disguised form a self-love.

The view that benevolence is a form of self-love. But Hume rejects this view in all aspect. For one thing, the simplest and most obvious cause which can be assigned for any phenomenon is probably the true one. And there is certainty cause in which it is far simpler to believe that a man is animated by interested benevolence and humanity than that he is prompted to act in a benevolent way by some tortuous consideration of self-interest. For another thing, even animals sometimes show kindness when there is no doubt of disguise or artifice. And if we acknowledge a disinterested benevolence in the inferior species, by what any law of similarity can we reject it in the superior. In gratitude and friendship and material tenderness we can often find marks of disinterested sentiments and actions. In general, the hypothesis which allows of a disinterested benevolence that distinct from self-love, has really more simplicity in it, and is more conformable to the harmony of nature than that which pretends to resolve all friendship and humanity into this latter principle.

Hume is bringing another aspect of morality which is self-love. But he had discussed self-love is a negative way. As we can see benevolence took the sovereign place in his philosophy and self-love is an important argument against benevolence. He has refuted self-love and all the theory that supported self-love. In his *An Enquiry Concerning the Principle of Morals* Hume had first discuss about self-love and then he brought argument regarding self-love. His main concern was whether self-love is accepted or not?

According to Hume self-love is a key element of human

nature. For Hume self-love is not a kind of moral theory. Thinkers like Hobbes explain the meaning of self-love because they notice that there is tendency in human virtues enhance happiness where vices increase human suffering. From these comments self-centered people think the link between self-love and public interest is the simply modification of self-love. Hume argues that the interest of the individual is related to the common interest of other people in society, but does not mean that the interest of others is nothing but self-love. All people have some degree of concern for public interest and this aspect of human nature create problems for Hume when he goes to explain the egoist account.

Although not entirely related to Hobbes theory, Hume's theory sheds a special light on the subject of self-love. Hume's theory is very different from Hobbes's theory however the match is in one place that is all human action is driven by self-love. Hume's argument against the self-love is largely correct. But Hume's theory is very narrow because there is not much to say here. On the other hand, Hobbes version of self-love is much stronger and more comprehensive. And when these two philosophers' theories are put together, we gain knowledge about the nature of moral action.

In Hume's opinion, the most generous friendship is a modification of self-love. When we seem to be deeply engaged in the planning of mankind's liberty and happiness, we unknowingly seek our own satisfaction. Through imagination, through refinement of reflection, out of passion, we want to take part in the interests of others and we imagine we are detached from all selfish considerations. But the most generous patriots the most miserly, the bravest heroes and the most despicable cowards consider their own happiness and well-being equal in every action. One can deduce from the apparent tendency of this opinion that those who have practiced it may not feel a real sense of benevolence.

Self-love can be interpreted in different appearances in a particular turn of the imagination. But the same turn of imagination does not exist in every human being, nor does the original passion give the same direction. According to the selfish system, there can be many differences in human character. In this case, one person is considered as virtuous and humane or another person is considered as vicious and inferior. Hume says "I esteem the man, whose self-love, by whatever means, is so directed as to give him a concern for others, and render him serviceable to society. As I hate or despise him, who has no regard to anything beyond his own gratifications and enjoyments." Although seemingly opposite, Hume thinks the two characters are basically following the same thing. The first person will feel more satisfied by doing social service, the second person will be more satisfied by following his personal enjoyment. We can see the first person as a benevolent and second as

selfish person. But the truth is that he is only serving the society because it is a way to feel inner satisfaction, on the other hand first person also follows self-love.

According to Hume the principle of self-love is not a moral principle because the ability to discuss moral behavior is limited. Secondly it is unnecessary for moral theory. For Hume the theory of self-love is flawed because here the personal interest is given more important which is completely contrary to the public interest. Hume shows with an example that there is a disunity between private interest and public interest. Self-love can never explain a situation where a mother gives up her own private interest to take care of her sick child. In this case, comparatively the mother's private interest is contradict the child's public interest. Although the mother's moral feelings lead her to appear in her child's interest. Hume describe this phenomenon as benevolence which is completely different from self-love because it seems that compromising one's own health and doing good to others can never be self-love.

However, the mother who sacrifices herself for her sick child in ring true to human nature and provides intense appetite for self-love but Hobbesian point of view, it's all about self-love. According to Hobbes people develop an opinion about the possibility of achieving what they want thinking and work on this possibility. In this case, mother's wish is always the welfare of her child. The mother can be seen as acting out of self-love because satisfaction of desire for the welfare of others will be considered as contribution to the good of an agent. This does not mean that the mother is not acting morally or that she lacks real concern for her child. In Hobbesian perspective of benevolence is the desire of good to another so it can be said that the mother has behaved benevolently in this situation.

For Hobbes, we approve of moral behavior even when we are not directly involved because we are always involved on some level. Our approval prioritizes the existence of virtues that allow us as individual security and happiness from there. Hobbes formulation of moral rule can be compared to Hume's virtues. The people who lack a concern for others should be rationally motivated to obey regarding the welfare of others because it is in their best interest as members of a society. Although this acceptance not be moral rule, in this case the idea is that individuals tend to appreciate the moral conduct of others because it contributes to the well-being of society for some time, thereby benefitting the individual as a member of that society.

Hume claims that the theory of self-love is no longer a legitimate acceptable doctrine because it is unnecessary as an ethical theory. For Hume, morality can be interpreted by benevolence and utility and it is useless and even inconsistent to moral theory to "seek for abstruse and remote systems" to explain the motivation for moral behavior. He argues that if the principle of self-love were

true then it means that while all of us, at bottom, pursue only our private interest, we wear these fair disguises, such as that of the friend, the lover, the helpful neighbor and so on. Hume says that benevolence is the obvious and natural and core source of moral sentiment. Here, Hume's conception of self-love can be presented little wider way as it is presented, unbridled selfishness that necessitates indifference to the welfare of others. However, by accepting Hobbesian perspective of self-love, we can theories how we are benevolent and justify why we care for and consider others. For Hume, passions and sentiments lies our nature of moral behavior. Hobbes takes this account a step further to argue that self-interest implies the way in which the passions and sentiments drive us toward nature of a certain moral behavior the way we do. It is necessary for morality because it provides an accurate justification of the moral behavior. This step helps Hume's moral theory because it can account for the roles of utility and approbation where Hume's Benevolence falls short. However, when this conception of human benevolence is considered in concert with utility and approbation, the moral inconsistency arises. By nature humans are moral so that they selflessly desire good for others; and humans are moral because it is useful to others and yields approval, which is beneficial to the agent.

Then, what motivates us to behave morally? If it is benevolence then it seems to us that concepts of utility and approbation are unnecessary; and if benevolence were the main principle which regulates humans moral behavior the moral theory would not need a concept of utility or approbation because they would be automatic, and the moral agent would be indifferent to the approval of his neighbours because his end would simply be the good of others. However, if utility and approbation are the motives of moral behavior, the mechanism that attracts the moral agent toward these must conduce to that of appetites and aversions. If utility and approbation cannot be divorced from a conception of what it is to be moral, then it can be said that no moral act can be performed with utility and approbation in mind; and if all moral acts are performed with utility and approbation in mind, then all moral acts are performed with some idea of benefit to the agent because of the obvious benefits of virtues. This does not imply that all moral behaviors must be performed with the

guidance of selfish motive of 'good-for-me.' It means that humans desire good for others, and that satisfying this desire is good for the each individual.

Here, it seems that Hume's theory must give way to Hobbesian self-love. Even if the end of moral action 'nowise affects us' the approval or the expectation of approval associated with the action must ultimately become the end of a given moral action, and thus acting in the name of utility can only be motivated by self-interest. Hume might respond by arguing that it would be false to reduce "all our concern for the public" to "a concern for our own happiness and preservation." However, what Here, all-pervasive idea of identity of interest has been missed to Hume. In Hobbes, utility and approval create the identity of interest between public and private sectors, so that any moral act performed in the interest of another is at bottom performed because on some short it is also in the agent's interest.

Thus, we can conclude that that it is not a coincidence that benevolent acts are met with approbation because we only know what virtues are by the public approval they bring out, so it can't be said that we act morally without the expecting approval. Discussing the above factor, it seems that Hume's principle of utility is more coherent with Hobbes' self-love than Hume's benevolence.

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