Hume on moral relativism

1 Hume's moral theory

<table>
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<th>Qualities that are ...</th>
<th>Immediately agreeable</th>
<th>Useful</th>
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<td>to Possessor</td>
<td>good humor</td>
<td>prudence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to Others</td>
<td>eloquence</td>
<td>generosity</td>
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Table 1  The Natural Virtues

Vices, on the other hand, are qualities of a person that are either disagreeable or harmful to the person who has the quality or to others.

2 Artificial lives

These descriptions of Diogenes and Pascal are taken from Pierre Bayle's Dictionnaire historique et critique. Specifically, they are taken from The dictionary historical and critical of Mr Peter Bayle, translated by Des Maizeaux, (London: 1734–38). The material on Diogenes comes from volume 2, p. 669. The material on Pascal is from volume 4, p. 488.
He brutishly would commit "As of Imparity in the public View of the World." He argued thus: it is not a Sin to dine; therefore it is not a Sin to dine in the Streets (69). Upon this Ground he eat in any Place whatsoever, and pretended that his Principle was to be extended to all natural Necessities; so that, as he believed that it was a lawful thing to lie with a Woman, he concluded that there was no harm in lying with her in public (70). This was calling Reason to the Affulgence of his Passions; he strained it; he did not understand it by using too many subtleties to understand it: it was in a manner rea om rationali inuire, — Going mad with Reason. This Verse of Terence may be applied to the Cynics.

Faciant nai intelligendo ut nihil intelligant (71).

By ever asling their Knowledge they appear like Fo.1s.

Diogenes, an Enemy to all Superfluity, and seeking as much as possible to be independant, committed publicly what the Caffs call the Sin of Efficiency, and would impudently say he wished he could in like manner satisfy the cravings of his Stomach. _Nανοπηγηματι_.

Figure 1  Diogenes
' this. He took, upon occasion, an iron girdle full
' of points, and put it round about his naked flesh,
' and when any vain thought came into his mind, or
' he took pleasure in the place where he was, or any
' such like thing happened, he gave himself some
' blows with his elbow, to redouble the violence of
' the prickings; and so put himself in mind of his
' duty (45). He had always in his thoughts the
' two great maxims, of renouncing all pleasures, and all
' superfluities; and he practised them in the very essence
' of his sinews, with a continual watchfulness over his senses, re-
' fusing every thing that was agreeable to him; and when necessity constrained him to do something
' which might give him any satisfaction, he had a wonder-
' ful art of diverting his mind from it, that it might have
' no stroke in it. As for instance, his continual sickness
' obliging him to feed delicately, he took great care not relish
' what he eat (41). He had no violent affection for
' those he loved (42), and advised others not to suffer
' any body to love them in a very high degree; that this
' was a fault which they did not enough consider, because
' the greatness of it was not sufficiently apprehended, since by
' entertaining and cherishing such an ardent affection, a man
' poffeffes a heart which belongs only to God; and that
' this is to rob him of the thing which in the whole world
' is most dear to him (43). He found fault with some dis-
' courteous of his inferiors, which the thought very innocent.
' If I said sometimes, (says he) upon occasion, that I had
' seen a beautiful woman, he was angry, and would tell me,
' that I must not talk so before women, and young people,
' because I did not know what thoughts I might excite in
' their minds thereby. He had so much humility, that the
' curate of St Stephen du Mont, who saw him in all his
' last sickness, very frequently said, He is a child, he is
' humble, he submits like a little child (45). By the same
' virtue he allowed a perfect freedom of telling him of his
' faults, and yielded to the advice which were given
' him without resistance (46). Having embraced a kind
' of life, abstracted from the world, at the age of thirty
' years, he governed himself by this maxim, of renouncing
' all pleasures and superfluities, and this he practised during
' the remainder of his life. To succeed in this design, he be-

Figure 2  Pascal
2.1 The sin of effeminacy

I should make you look this up yourselves, but since we have this blank page, what the heck.

Here’s Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Second Part of the Second Part, question 154.¹

wherever there occurs a special kind of deformity whereby the venereal act is rendered unbecoming, there is a determinate species of lust. This may occur in two ways: First, through being contrary to right reason, and this is common to all lustful vices; secondly, because, in addition, it is contrary to the natural order of the venereal act as becoming to the human race: and this is called “the unnatural vice.” This may happen in several ways. First, by procuring pollution, without any copulation, for the sake of venereal pleasure: this pertains to the sin of “uncleanness” which some call “effeminacy.” Secondly, by copulation with a thing of undue species, and this is called “bestiality.” Thirdly, by copulation with an undue sex, male with male, or female with female, as the Apostle states (Rm. 1:27): and this is called the “vice of sodomy.” Fourthly, by not observing the natural manner of copulation, either as to undue means, or as to other monstrous and bestial manners of copulation.

¹ Here’s where to go to find a passage in St. Thomas: http://library.nlx.com/.