

Hume on moral relativism

1 Hume's moral theory

| Qualities that are ... | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| | Immediately agreeable | Useful |
| to Possessor | <i>good humor</i> | <i>prudence</i> |
| to Others | <i>eloquence</i> | <i>generosity</i> |

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.

[L] *He brutishly would commit Acts of Impurity 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 Assistance of his Passions; he strained it; he did not understand it by using too many subtleties to understand it: it was in a manner *reſta cum ratione infanire*, — *Going mad with Reason*. This Verse of Terence may be applied to the Cynics,

Faciunt nœ intelligendo ut nihil intelligant (71).

By over acting their Knowledge they appear like Fools.

Diogenes, an Enemy to all Superfluity, and seeking as much as possible to be independant, committed publickly what the Casuists call the Sin of Effeminacy, and would impudently say he wished he could in like manner satisfy the cravings of his Stomach. *Ναίπεργον εἶναι*

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 (40).’ He had always in his thoughts *these*
two great maxims, of renouncing all pleasure, and all
superfluity ; and he practised them in the worst of his
illness, with a continual watchfulness over his senses, re-
fusing them absolutely every thing that was agreeable to
them : 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 share 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
possesses a heart which belongs only to G O D ; 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 dif-
courses of his sister, which she thought very innocent.
If I said sometimes, (says she (44), upon occasion, that I had
seen a beautiful woman, he was angry, and would tell me,
that I must not talk so before footmen, 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 advices 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/>.